

**Guru Granth Sahib Speaks-I**

# **Death and After**

**Surindar Singh Kohli**



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GURU GRANTH SAHIB SPEAKS - 1

## **DEATH AND AFTER**

***By the same author:***

Guru Granth Sahib; An Analytical Study; Dictionary of Guru Granth Sahib, Dictionary of Mythological References in Guru Granth Sahib, The Sikh Philosophy, Yoga of the Sikhs, The Sikh Prayers, Sikhism and Major World Religions, Outlines of Sikh Thought, Sikh Ethics, Life and Ideals of Guru Gobind Singh (based on original sources), Sikh Predictions, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, Travels of Guru Nanak, The Ninth Nanak, Sikhism and Guru Granth Sahib, A History of Punjabi Literature, A Conceptual Encyclopaedia of Guru Granth Sahib, The Sikh and Sikhism and Real Sikhism.

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਕਿਥੈ ਤੈਭੇ ਮਾਪਿਆ,  
ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਤੂ ਜਣਿਓਹਿ॥  
ਤੈ ਪਾਸਹੁ ਓਇ ਲਦਿ ਗਏ,  
ਤੂੰ ਅਜੈ ਨ ਪਤੀਣੋਹਿ॥੨੩॥

*O Farid ! Where are thy mother and father,  
Who are responsible for thy birth ?  
They have gone away from thee,  
but still thou art not convinced.*



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## FOREWORD

Death is a certainty. Therefore, in all ages, people have been absorbed in comprehending the mystery behind this perennial subject. Why everything that takes birth must die? Who is responsible for birth and death? People who die, narrate various types of experiences. The dying man becomes conscious about the presence of some beings coming from some other world for taking away the life-force or soul. The sages in various countries recorded about this phenomenon of death in their 'books of the dead'. The most ancient document on the subject that has come down to us is the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. It is a compendium of incantations, prayers, litanies, procedures of treating the deceased etc., recorded from the funerary texts belonging to various centuries. They reveal the beliefs of the Egyptians in the Immortality of the soul and the life after death. The Egyptians worshipped the sun-god RA. The other revered deities were Osiris and his sister Isis. Another work of importance on the subject is the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It is said to be put in writing in the eighth century and is attributed to the Great Tibetan Guru Padmasambhava. It presents the belief in the continuation of life after death. It also brings forward elaborate rituals for conducting the soul safely to the regions in the yond. This work was written as a guide for the dying. It also presents a belief in the local gods, mountain spirits and other deities. The experiences associated with the time of death have also been described in this Book. The culmination of these experiences is the scene of Judgement, during which the Lord and the Justice of the Dead, whose name is Yama Raja (and who is also

called Dharma Raja), just like the Indian belief, examines the performance of the individual in the world with the help of his tale-telling mirror. After knowing the merits or demerits of the work of the individual, he is sent to be reborn in one of the appropriate lokas (realms). Though we do not have with us the separate *Hindu Book of the Dead*, and its wisdom on the subject is scattered in various works including Puranas, it must have cast its strong impact on the Tibetans, many centuries earlier. The concept of Dharma Raja or Yama Raja is purely Indian, though Chitra-Gupta working with every individual has been transformed into a tale-telling mirror.

The literary legacy of Maya civilisation of central America has not survived, but still it is believed that the perished heritage might have presented the *Maya Book of the Dead*. Much of the Maya ritual and art was dedicated to the death-process according to Maya mythology and funeral art, which described death as a journey. Another Book of the Dead described by Stanislav Grof in his work *Book of the Dead* is the *Nahuatl Book of the Dead*, which presents the Precolumbian eschatological mythology, symbolizing the process of spiritual death and rebirth. Mr. Grof has mentioned that good deal of literature on death and rebirth exists in various countries of Europe, where Christianity spread, therefore he thinks strongly about the *Christian Book of the Dead*. The religions of the world have talked about the matters concerning the soul and the life after death except the *Charvaka Religion*, therefore all of them can be considered to have their *Books of the Dead*, though no books like the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* or the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* have been written in them. In this context it can be said that the *Buddhist Book of the Dead*, *Jaina Book of the Dead*, *Jewish Book of the Dead*, *Zoroastrian Book of the Dead*, *Islamic Book of the Dead*, *Tao's Book of the Dead*, *Confucius' Book of the Dead* and lastly, the *Sikh's Book of the Dead* can be recorded or produced.

Thus this work may be called the *Sikh's Book of the Dead*. It cannot be called the part and parcel of the *Hindu Book of the Dead*, because it has its own distinguishing marks. Sikhism is purely a monotheistic faith, while Hinduism is polygamous. Sikhism does not believe in Heaven and Hell in the same way as Hinduism does, though Hinduism has cast its influence in several ways on Sikh way of life.

With this work, a new series of books on the Sikh Scripture is being launched, which is entitled "Guru Granth Sahib Speaks" series. The first volume is on the subject of death and life after death, therefore it has been given the title *Death and After*. The list on which it is proposed to write the books further carries a good number of subjects. If God Wills and gives me some more time for service, I hope to complete a good number of subjects for the Sikhs living abroad, in foreign countries. The next volume that I propose to write in the Series is on "Naam" (Name of the Lord), which is the crux of thought in the Scripture. With their absorption in the Name of the Lord, the Sikhs will rise much higher spiritually and this is the requirement according to the Guru for a Sikh, because according to Guru Nanak Dev, "ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥੫॥" (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 72), which can be translated as "The Lord's Name is within the divine Command, which can be realised only through the True Guru."

The present work begins with a general chapter containing, in a nutshell, the description of the subject in the Scripture. After this the visible death and the time of death have been discussed. Then three elegies have been given, two by the founder Guru and one by the third Guru. The next chapter is on the messages of death, which we receive in various ways. After this the god of death i.e. Yama, who is also called the god of Justice i.e. Dharmaraja has been described, mentioning his functions alongwith the conjunctive words and symbols used for him in the Scripture. This

chapter is followed by another chapter about the city of Yama and the path that he or his messengers traverse in order to fulfil their mission of extracting the soul from the body. We now have the chapter describing the disposal of the lifeless dead body by various people or religious groups in the world. After this we have the chapter on Heaven and Hell followed by two chapters on 'Reincarnation' and 'Karma and Transmigration'. Then we have the experiences of the soul, while leaving the body, divided into two chapters entitled 'Near-death Experiences' and 'Out of Body Experiences'. The last chapter has been given the title 'Miscellaneous', in which several undealt aspects of the subject have been briefly discussed. The references containing the appropriate verses from the Scripture are given after each chapter. The English translation or the thought of the verses has been given in the chapters. All the above material will introduce the subject to the reader very briefly and he will be able to comprehend the subject's intricacies in the light of the Sikh Scripture. I am confident that the Sikhs all over the world will be benefitted amply by this Series.

—**Surindar Singh Kohli**

## THE MYSTERY OF DEATH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

Death is a reality. Whatever is born, must die.<sup>1</sup> The bride of life will one day be taken away by the bridegroom of death.<sup>2</sup> Just as the peasant sows his field and lays his sickle to the crop at the harvesting time, whether the crop is mature or immature, in a similar way the sickle of death does not care for the 'jiva' at any age.<sup>3</sup> After day the night comes and after the night the day dawns. Time and tide wait for no man. There is no fixed time for death, neither the child, nor the youth, nor the old escape it. That time is never known when yama throws its noose.<sup>4</sup> Every moment which passes, reduces the span of our life. The Jiva does not realise it. The death as a rat is continually cutting at your rope of life.<sup>5</sup>

The soul (*Jivatma*) is eternal. The death lay its hand only on the body, but nothing is destroyed. The air mixes in air, light in light, earth in earth.<sup>6</sup> For what then one should weep the Guru questions :

*Who is dead ?, O who is dead ?*

*Meet ye knowers of Brahma and discuss.*

*A miracle hath happened.* (Ramkali M. 5, p. 885)<sup>7</sup>

In the next moment, the Guru himself replies :

*He knows nothing of the life beyond death.*

*The one who weeps, also leaves the world.*

*Jiva is tied by illusion and worldly attachment.*

*Which becomes dream and the blind wagers.*

*The Creator has started this play.*

*The Jiva comes and goes under His 'Hukm'.*

*Nothing dies nor anything is prone to death.  
 The Jiva does not die, it has to become eternal.  
 It is not, whatever you think of it.  
 Whoever knows it, I bow before him.  
 The Guru hath removed my illusion, saith Nanak,  
 None dies, none comes and goes.*

(Ramkali M. 5, p. 885)\*

The Science talks of the indestructibility of matter and the same has been expounded here. But the Gurus besides talking about the elements and their indestructibility talk also of light of the soul and Higher Soul.

Life and death are the relative terms. The soul is life or consciousness. With soul the body is alive and without soul it is dead. The mind, intellect and the vital breath (*prana*) are attached with the soul and not with the body. When the gross body (*sthula sarira*) dies, the subtle body (*sukshama sarira*) or the soul consisting of the vital breath, mind and intellect lives. This subtle body of the soul also dies, when the state of final emancipation is realised. Thus the term death only applies to the body, whether it is gross or subtle. The god of death or 'yama' can destroy the body only.

After death, the subtle body rises out of the gross body. The Jiva of this subtle body moves into the plane of those souls, which bear subtle bodies. In the *Adi Granth* it is written: "The dead meets the dead".<sup>9</sup> This means that the souls which leave the gross bodies of this world meet those souls which have already left their gross bodies in this world. Nobody knows how death takes place. The subtle body going out of the gross body is never seen. None can point out the direction of its movement or the plane on which it settles.<sup>10</sup> Guru Nanak Dev has elucidated his thoughts about death in the following manner:

*The body is dust; the air speaks through it.  
 Tell, O wise man ! who hath died;*

*The ego, quarrelsome nature and intellect have died.  
The one that sees, hath not died.  
The One that Pervades hath not died.*

(Gauri M. 1, p. 152)<sup>11</sup>

*The death which has frightened the whole world.  
The Word of the Guru hath enlightened me about that  
death,*

*How should I die now ?*

*My mind understands real death.*

*They die who have not known the Lord*

*All talk about death,*

*But whoever dies in 'Sehj' (equipoise) becomes  
immortal.*

*My mind is in ecstasy, saith Kabir,*

*The illusion hath gone and the Lord remains with me.*

(Gauri Kabir, p. 327)<sup>12</sup>

Kabir is emphatic on the point that none knows about his end.<sup>13</sup> Farid says : "The falcon-death pounces upon its prey unexpectedly.<sup>14</sup> The death-end is like the slippery bank of the river.<sup>15</sup> As has been said above, one should try to understand death through the Word of the Guru. One who understands, he never fears death.<sup>16</sup> Before death, he is in ecstasy and after death he merges in the Lord. Guru Amar Das says :

*Nothing do I know about my end, how shall I die ?  
If the Lord is not forgotten, the death will be easy.  
The world feareth death, everybody wants to live.  
By the Grace of the Guru, one dies while living,  
He understands it in His Hukm,  
If one dies such death, saith Nanak, he attains eternal  
life.*

(Bihagre ki Var M. 4, Salok M. 3, p. 555)<sup>17</sup>

The Sikh Gurus believe in the theory of Karma and Transmigration. They often talk of the god of Justice and his messengers. They also talk of Chitra and Gupta, who present the account of the individual's life before the god, who is

the sole deciding authority about the future of the soul. They also have given hints about heaven and hell. But the ideals presented by the Sikh Gurus and the Bhagats and imbibed by a true devotee takes one much higher, where the god of Justice hath no approach<sup>18</sup> and where heaven and hell and even *Mukti* are rejected.<sup>19</sup>

The path that the soul traverses after death is dark, difficult and hazardous. Much has been said about this path in the Puranas. According to Guru Arjan Dev, this path can be easily traversed with the light of the Name of the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

When a dear and near one departs, the kinsmen weep. A *siapa* (mourning) is arranged and a great hue and cry is raised. This weeping has been condemned in the Sikh Scripture, because it is only due to the material losses on account of the death of an individual.<sup>21</sup>

When the soul appears before the god of Justice after death, a decision is taken about its future according to its actions in the material world. *It may be sent to be reborn as an animal, a bird or an insect. It may even be sent to higher planes of gods according to its actions. It may be sent to be born as a human being again for its further development.*

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(ਵਡਹੰਸ ਮ: ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 579)

## THE VISIBLE DEATH

None has ever seen Death. The eyes that we have been given can only see the material world and whatever materialises before them. The soul which leaves the body is never seen and the one who takes away the soul from our body is also not visible. One feels puzzled at this dilemma. The perception of our mind and physical eyes is very limited; it works only as long as the life-force lasts within the body. The body is composed of five elements and the mind is also born out of the combination of five elements. The Guru says : "This mind is born of five elements." (Asa M. 1, p. 415).<sup>1</sup> Therefore although the soul lives in the house (body) made of five elements, it provides the body with the life-breath, the five senses, the mind and the intellect. The five senses become the playground of the mind and the intellect works mostly in consonance with the mind. But within the gross body of the five elements, there is another body, which is known as the subtle body (*sukshama sarira* or the *linga sarira*). At the time of death, this subtle body, which is also invisible, leaves with the soul inclusive of the mind and intellect alongwith the good and bad impression of the actions committed in lifetime. The Guru says :

*When one meets the True Guru, he causes him  
to visualise the mystery of death.*

(Gauri M. 1, p. 153)<sup>2</sup>

There are people throughout the world, who believe in the total extinction of a 'being' or a personality at the time of death. For them the world is merely a biological process. There is evolution, there is procreation and there is extinction.

They believe only in what they see. That is the only truth for them. They are not bothered about any life after death. Such people are known as 'charvakas' in India. They do not believe in the life to come, in heaven or hell, in reincarnation or transmigration. They believe that the life, doomed for an end and extinction, must be enjoyed fully, therefore their dictum has been : "Eat, drink and be merry". But on the other hand, there had been great thinkers, saints and mystics, who considered some purpose of life. They ruminated over several questions concerning life, which included :

1. Why were we born at all ?
2. Which power brought us to life ?
3. Why are we destined to die ?
4. Can there be any eternal life or eternal entity ? and
5. Does the life exist only visibly ? Or is there any invisible power or entity ?

Such like innumerable questions cropped up in the mind of thinking man, who saw life flourishing in all directions, not only concerning the human being, but also in vegetable kingdom and animal kingdom. But he also visualised the decline and fall of all the visible life. He saw the growth of life from childhood to old age passing through the stage of youth full of vitality and vigour. (Salok M. 9, p. 1428).<sup>3</sup> He noticed that the seed grows into a beautiful flower and takes the ultimate form of fruit, when it fall down from the bough and cannot be re-grafted. (Salok Kabir, p. 1366).<sup>4</sup> Whatever is seen by the outward eye, has been described several times in the Sikh Scripture; e.g.

1. *Whatever we see, is created and destroyed.*  
(Asa M. 1, p. 352)<sup>5</sup>
2. *Whatever we see, is taken away by Death.*  
(Suhi M. 5, p. 740)<sup>6</sup>
3. *Whatever we see, is all destroyed like the shade of cloud.*  
(Gauri M. 9, p. 219)<sup>7</sup>
4. *Whatever we see, is all false (ephemeral).*  
(Maru M. 5, p. 1083)<sup>8</sup>

The oviparous beings (*andaj*) will perish, the viviparous beings (*jeraj*) will pass away, the beings produced by heat and dampness (*setaj*) are prone to destruction and the vegetable kingdom (*utbhuj*) will also be eliminated. (Sarang M. 5, p. 1204).<sup>9</sup> One sees the caravan of life moving away and getting into oblivion. The Sufi mystic Farid Shakarganj says :

*I have seen with these eyes many beings passing away,  
In such a situation the people think about themselves  
and I think about myself.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1382)<sup>10</sup>

Farid even questions the fellow being : "Where are your mother and father, who gave birth to you; they have left you, then why do you not consider this truth." (p. 1381).<sup>11</sup> Guru Nanak Dev says : "My beloved friends have gone away and are sleeping in the graveyard, I am also moving away in sorrowfulness and lament in lean voice." (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 23).<sup>12</sup>

It has been conclusively said : "The kings, the subjects and the chieftains, none will survive, the shops, cities and bazars will fall down under the Lord's Will; the fool considers the stables and winsome houses as his own; the stores, full of materials are emptied in an instant; the horses, the chariots, the camels, the elephants, the armours, the orchards, the lands and mansions, all thine own, where are they? The tents, the beds woven with webbing tape, the canopies and the brocaded silk (all thine own, where are they?). Only the Bounteous Lord is Ever-existent, Who is identified through His Creation. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 141).<sup>13</sup>

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## THE TIME OF DEATH

The time of death is fixed. Even if one is involved in an accident and many parts of his body are damaged, even if he undergoes major operations, he will recover, if he is not destined to die. When a person is born, the writ on his head fixes the time of his physical end. It may be a natural and peaceful death. It may be a death by accident. It may be the death by natural causes. One may be killed by enemies; one may die by drowning or burnt in fire or buried under the debris of a house caused by an earthquake. There can be any type of mishap. The question arises as to who controls our destiny? The answer at once comes from the "Guru-bani" (the hymns of the Gurus):

*No one can kill him, whom God protects.*

(Gauri M. 5, p. 292)<sup>1</sup>

In Indian culture, a particular time is fixed for conducting the marriage, when the bridegroom comes to take away the bride with him; this appointed time is called 'Saha'. At the time of death, the death as bridegroom comes to take away the life as bride:

*The day when the damsel was engaged,  
the exact time was recorded for marriage,  
The angel of death, about whom we heard through  
our ears, he comes to show his face,  
He draws out the humble 'life',  
by cracking the bones,  
After marrying the bride of 'life',  
the death as bridegroom will take it away.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1377)<sup>2</sup>

The writ regarding the fixed time can never be averted, the 'life' may be caused to understand this.

This fixed time (*Saba*) is infallible :

*The date fixed for the union is infallible.*

(Bilawal M. 5, Chhant, p. 845)<sup>3</sup>

In his Elegy, Guru Nanak Dev says :

*O elder one ! the person came in the world quite naked,  
with the recorded writ of pain and pleasure,  
The recorded writ cannot be averted,  
which is based on past deeds,  
The True Lord recorded both nectar and poison,  
to whichever side He wanted, the person adopted it,  
The enchantress Maya worked her spells on him,  
she put the multicoloured thread around his neck;  
With shallow intellect, his mind became shallow,  
he ate the fly with the sweet molasses,  
Without propriety of conduct, he was born in the Iron  
Age, he was bound down quite naked and sent  
away.*

(Wadhans M. 1, p. 582)<sup>4</sup>

The above verses of Guru Nanak Dev are quite clear on the point that the Lord's Writ is recorded on the forehead of every mortal and according to this Writ, the time of the death of the person is fixed, when he has to leave the arena of this world and the Writ is based by the Lord according to the past deeds of the person concerned. The nectar as well as the poison i.e. both good and bad actions are recorded within the Writ, and further life depends on the actions performed in his present life. The influences of Maya play a great part in the development of the person.

Though the time of death is fixed according to the writ on the forehead of the mortal, but no one knows about the particular time, when it will occur. According to Sheikh Farid :



*The crane, sitting on the bank of a river,  
was busy in his sports,  
In such a situation, the falcon pounced upon him  
unexpectedly.*

*The falcon of God pounced upon him and  
he forgot his sports,  
This was God's Will, he could not contemplate such  
a thing in his mind.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1383)<sup>5</sup>

The death comes unexpectedly for the mortal, about which he cannot have any inkling earlier. That time cannot be known, when the noose of Yama falls around the neck of the mortal. Guru Ram Das says :

*One does not have any inkling of the time,  
when the agonising Death comes to seize the  
mortal.*

(Tilang M. 4, p. 723)<sup>6</sup>

Generally, it is believed that when one achieves old age, he is nearing the time of death. The death-stage is considered the last stage in the physical growth of the mortal. Guru Nanak Dev has mentioned in one of his hymns, the ten stages in the life of a human being :

*At ten, one is in childhood,  
at twenty, he is a youth and at thirty  
he is called 'handsome',  
At forty, he is in the prime of his life,  
at fifty, his foot becomes unsure,  
at sixty, the old age seizes him,  
At seventy, he loses intellect and at eighty,  
he cannot perform his errands,  
At ninety, he is bed-ridden,  
he loses consciousness about his strength,  
I have sought, searched and seen, saith Nanak,  
the world is a mansion of smoke.*

(Majh M. 1, p. 138)<sup>7</sup>

The death is the tenth and the last stage, when the

mortal leaves the world. Though the death is the finale of life, yet it does not wait for the old age. It can come at any time in life, in childhood, youth and old age :

*This world is such a spectacle that no one can stay  
for a long time.....  
The children, the old and the young ones, O brother !  
are all taken away by Yama,  
The poor human being is like a mouse,  
who is eaten by the cat of death,  
The so-called rich as well as the poor  
no one receives any preference from her,  
She kills the king and his subjects alike,  
such is the powerful death.*

(Bilawal Kabir, p. 855)\*

Guru Arjan Dev has given the example of a peasant, who at the time of harvesting his crop, does not leave the ripe as well as the unripe crop in his field :

*Just as a peasant sows (the seed for) his crop,  
and (at the harvesting time) cuts both ripe and  
unripe crop,  
Whosoever is born, he is assuredly destined to die.*

(Asa M. 5, p. 375)<sup>9</sup>

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(ਵਡਹੰਸੁ ਮ: ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 582)

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(ਤਿਲੰਗ ਮ: ੪, ਪੰਨਾ 723)

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(ਵਾਰ ਮਾਝ ਮ: ੧, ਪੰਨਾ 138)

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(ਬਿਲਾਵਲੁ ਕਬੀਰ, ਪੰਨਾ 855)

9. ਜੈਸੇ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੁ ਬੋਵੈ ਕਿਰਸਾਨੀ ॥

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(ਆਸਾ ਮ: ੫, ਪੰਨਾ 375)

## ELEGIES

(There are nine elegies in *Guru Granth Sahib*, five in the name of Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru and four in the name of Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru. We are giving here the translation of two elegies of Guru Nanak Dev and one of Guru Amar Das. In Punjabi folklore the elegy is given the name 'Alabuni'; it is the song of mourning and lamentation, which is sung at the time of death of a person)

*Blessed is the Creator, the True King,  
who hath put the world in its avocations;  
When the time is up and the measure is full,  
the dear one is driven off,  
The dear one is driven off, when the writ is received,  
all the brethren lament,  
The body and soul are separated, when  
the life-span comes to an end, O my mother !  
Whatever is there in the writ and  
whatever are the previous actions,  
he receives accordingly,  
Blessed is the Creator, the True King,  
who hath put the world in its avocations.*

*O my brethren ! Remember the Lord,  
every one will have to go like this,  
Here the avocation is false and short-lived,  
one has ultimately to go further,  
One has to go further like a guest,  
then why to indulge in ego ?  
One should remember His Name,  
by serving whom, one obtains comfort in His Court,*

*In the next world, one is utterly powerless,  
 everyone is rewarded according to his actions,  
 O my brethren ! Remember the Lord,  
 everyone will have to go like this.*

*Whatever is liked by the Almighty Lord, that happens,  
 this world offers an opportunity for His Blessings,  
 The True Creator pervades in water and plain  
 and in upper and nether regions,  
 The True Creator is Incomprehensible and Infinite,  
 His end cannot be known,  
 Their coming is fruitful,*

*who have meditated on Him single-mindedly,  
 It is only on His Command that after demolition,  
 there is improved reconstruction,  
 Whatever is liked by the Almighty Lord, that happens,  
 this world offers an opportunity for His Blessings.*

*O elder one ! saith Nanak, he only weeps truly,  
 who weeps in Lord's Love,  
 O elder one ! one weeps only for the household articles,  
 therefore all mourning is vicious,  
 All the mourning is vicious, the world is careless,  
 it weeps only for wealth,  
 The discrimination between good and bad does not  
 strike it and wastes its life uselessly,  
 Whosoever has come here, will have to leave,  
 all your pride is thus false,  
 O elder one ! saith Nanak, he only weeps truly,  
 who weeps in Lord's Love.*

(Wadhans M. 1, pp. 578-79)<sup>1</sup>

*Come and meet, O friends !  
 and contemplate on the True Name,  
 Weep over your body's separation and  
 remember the Lord.*

*Remember the Lord and have a look on the path,  
 where we also have to go,*

*He, who has created, He only destroys,  
 everything occurs under His Will,  
 Whatever He inscribed in the writ,  
 that only happened, what can we say ?  
 Come and meet, O friends !  
 and contemplate on the True Name.*

*O people ! That death is not bad,  
 if one knows how to die,  
 Serve the Almighty Lord of thine,  
 so that thy path in the yond is easy to tread,  
 If you tread on the easy path,  
 then you will be rewarded with honours in the next  
 world,*

*If thou goest with the offering,  
 thou shalt merge in the True Lord and  
 thy honour shall be approved,  
 Thou shalt receive a place in Lord's Mansion and  
 loved by Him and enjoy His Munificence with love,  
 O people ! That death is not bad,  
 if one knows how to die.*

*If the death is approved by the Lord,  
 then the death of the valiant person is just,  
 In the next world only those are called valiant,  
 who receive true veneration in Lord's Court,  
 They go with honour and obtain glory in Lord's Court,  
 they do not suffer any affliction there,  
 They meditate on that One Lord and get their reward;  
 by serving Him, their fear is dispelled,  
 Do not say anything in ego and remain within thyself,  
 the Lord knows everything,  
 If the death is approved by the Lord,  
 then the death of the valiant person is just.*

*For whom should we lament ?, saith Nanak,  
 when this world is only a play,*

*The Lord scans His Own Creation and reflects on it,  
 He reflects on His Creation, begotten by Him;  
     whatever He hath produced, He only knows  
     about it,  
 He Himself looks at it,  
     Himself comprehends it and Himself knows His  
     Will,  
 He only knows whatever He hath produced,  
     His Beauty is limitless,  
 For whom should we lament ?,  
     when the world is only a play.*

(Wadhans M. 1, pp. 579-80)<sup>2</sup>

*O my Lord's brides ! Listen, serve thy Lord by reflecting  
     over His Name,  
 The flawed bride does not know the Lord,  
     forgetting Him deceptively, she wails,  
 The faithful one also weeps remembering ever,  
     thinking of His Attributes;  
     the Lord neither dies nor goes away,  
 The Guruward knows and recognises Him through  
     His Name and is merged in His true love,  
 She, who hath not known her Lord,  
     the Scribe of destiny,  
     she hath been beguiled by falsehood,  
 O my Lord's brides ! Listen, serve thy Lord by  
     reflecting over His Name.*

*The Lord Himself hath Created the whole world,  
     in which one transmigrates,  
 The mammon's attachment hath misled the mortal,  
     who takes birth and dies repeatedly,  
 One takes birth and dies repeatedly,  
     the vices increase and one is beguiled without  
     knowledge,  
 The Lord is not realised without the Name and  
     the birth is wasted, the flawed and false bride  
     weeps,*

*The Lord is the Life of the world,  
for whom then one has to weep ?  
Only she bewails who forgets the Lord,  
The Lord Himself hath Created the whole world,  
in which one transmigrates.*

*That Lord is the True One, ever True One,  
He dies not and goes not,  
The ignorant bride has gone astray,  
she sits in duality as a widow,  
She sits in duality like a widow,  
she suffers in mammon's attachment,  
her age is diminishing and her body is withering,  
Whatever has come, all of it must go away,  
one suffers because of duality,  
The thought of Yama (death) does not occur to the  
mortal, the mammon drags the world towards it,  
which is absorbed in avarice and greed,  
That Lord is True, ever True,  
He neither dies nor goes.*

*Those brides bewail, who have been separated from  
the Lord;  
those blind ones do not know that their Lord is ever  
with them,  
The True Lord is realised only through the Guru's  
Grace,  
the faithful one ever remembers Him in her heart,  
She remembers the Lord within her heart,  
who is ever with her,  
the self-willed bride considers Him far away,  
She, who has not comprehended the Lord's presence  
with her,  
her body is of no avail and rolls in dust,  
The bride who ever remembers the Lord in her heart,  
she is united with Him through Grace,*



*Those brides bewail, who have been separated from  
the Lord,  
those blind ones do not know that their Lord is ever  
with them.*

(Wadhans M. 3, pp. 583-84)<sup>3</sup>

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(ਅਲਾਹਟੀਆ, ਵਡਹੰਸੁ ਮ: ੩, ਪੰਨੇ 583-84)

## MESSAGES OF DEATH

Every mortal, who is born, has a fixed time of death. Every moment that passes, brings the death nearer. This makes it quite clear that every moment gives the message of impending death and makes one cautious about his duties towards the self, the humanity at large and the Creator. Sheikh Farid has said :

*O Farid ! The call is coming,  
do not tarry to get robbed.* (Salok Farid, p. 1377)<sup>1</sup>

Though the time of death is quite uncertain and it may come at any time in life like chopping of plants, the mature as well as immature, at the time of harvesting, still the coming of old age is considered a sure sign of the coming death.

### Old Age

Guru Nanak Dev has depicted the old age in the following manner :

*On becoming old, the youth and body pine away, the throat is choked by phlegm and the water flows down from the eyes. The feet lose their walking power and the hands begin to tremble, but still the mammon-worshipper does not enshrine Lord-God in his heart. The awareness is lost, the black hair turn white and no one likes to keep him at home.....*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1014)<sup>2</sup>

There are several Salokas of Sheikh Farid, in which he portrays the old age as the signal of impending death :

*Look Farid ! What has happened, the beard has*

*turned grey, the end of life is coming near and the past life is left far behind.* (Salok 9, p. 1378)<sup>3</sup>

*O Farid ! Thy eyes with continued seeing have become weak and the ears with continued hearing have been losing the power of hearing—The bough of body, on becoming ripe, is changing its colour.*

(Salok 11, p. 1378)<sup>4</sup>

*O Farid ! Those who have not absorbed themselves in the Love of the Lord, when their hair are black, there will hardly be anyone, who will absorb himself in Lord's Love, when his hair turn grey, therefore cherish the Love for the Lord, so that thou mayest have a new colour.*

(Salok 12, p. 1378)<sup>5</sup>

*O Farid ! I have seen those eyes, which allured the world, they could not even endure the streak of antimony, but now the winged insects have taken birth in their sockets.*

(Salok 14, p. 1378)<sup>6</sup>

*O Farid ! With these small legs, I have traversed across the plains and mountains, but now my bowl lying nearby, appears to me at a distance of a hundred miles.*

(Salok 20, p. 1378)<sup>7</sup>

*Sheikh Farid has grown old and his body has begun to tremble; even if one lives for a hundred years, the body will ultimately become dust.*

(Salok 41, p. 1380)<sup>8</sup>

*O Farid ! While the two lamps of eyes were shining, the angel of death came and sat down; he captured the citadel of body and robbed the interior and while going away, he extinguished the lamps.*

(Salok 48, p. 1380)<sup>9</sup>

*O Farid ! The hair of the head reared and turned grey, the beard turned grey and the whiskers also turned grey; O careless and insane mind ! Why art thou still enjoying the luxuries ?* (Salok 55, p. 1380)<sup>10</sup>

*The chewing teeth, the walking feet, the shining eyes and the listening ears have ceased functioning—And the body has cried out loudly in lamentation : Those dearest comrades have left me.*

(Salok 77, p. 1381)<sup>11</sup>

Another saint Bhikhan sings in the same strain :

*The water flows down from the eyes and the body has lost its strength; the hair have become milk-white; the throat is choking and cannot utter a word; what the mortal will do then ?*

(Sorath Bhikhan, p. 659)<sup>12</sup>

The Gurus have in their poems entitled 'Pahre' identified the life-span with the four watches of the night. The fourth watch pertains to the old age. A few examples are given below :

*In the fourth watch of the night, O my trader-friend ! one becomes old and his body weakens, his eyes go blind and he cannot see, O my trader-friend ! His ears hear no utterance;*

*With blind eyes and tasteless tongue, he depends on the strength of others; he has no virtues within him, how can he obtain peace ?*

*The self-willed undergoes births and deaths; when the crop ripens, it bends, breaks and perishes, Why should then one be proud of the body, which comes and goes ?*

*O mortal ! In the fourth watch of the night, recognise the Word (God's Name) under Guru's guidance, saith Nanak.*

(Sri Raga M. 1, p. 76)<sup>13</sup>

*In the fourth watch of the night, O my trader-friend ! The Lord has brought the time of leaving the world; With your hands, serve the perfect True Guru, O my trader-friend ! The life-span is going to end.*

(Sri Raga M. 4, P. 77)<sup>14</sup>

*In the fourth watch of the night, O my trader-friend ! That day of death has come near;*

*Under the guidance of the Guru, remember the Lord's Name, O my trader-friend ! Which will be thy friend in Lord's Court.* (Sri Raga M. 5, p. 77)<sup>15</sup>

Though every moment of life, which passes away, gives us the message of death by diminishing the life-span, the 'OLD AGE' as mentioned above, is a 'Sure Message' of the impending death. All the faculties of the body, with their continued functioning during life, dwindle away, when the mortal attains old age. The signs of the 'old age' as described above are as follows :

1. *The black colour of the hair turns grey. This is the most important outward sign of 'old age'. Even those people, who have other hues of hair because of the climatic effect, also turn white on reaching old age. Some people use hair-dye in their advanced age in order to look young, but the old age appears in several other forms.* (Var Asa M. 1, p. 465)<sup>16</sup>
2. All the senses and sense-organs are considerably weakened. The eyes lose power of sight, the ears lose the power of hearing, the nostrils, the power of smelling, the tongue the power of taste. The hands, feet and mouth become weak in their functioning etc. etc.
3. There is choking in throat.

All these signs convey the message of approaching death.

The Gurus and saints have repeatedly warned us about our duty. Guru Arjan Dev says :

*He, who has created thee out of this drop of water (semen),  
And has fashioned thy body from the earth,  
He, who has infused in thee His Light alongwith the knowledge and power of discrimination,  
He, who has protected thee within the mother's womb,  
O mortal ! remember that Preserver,  
And give up all other thoughts.*

*He, who has given thee father and mother,  
 He, who has given thee brothers and sons,  
 He, who has given thee wife and friends,  
 Keep that Lord in thy mind.  
 He, who has given thee the invaluable air,  
 He, who has given thee the priceless water,  
 He, who has given thee the fire to burn,  
 O mortal ! remain under the protection of that Lord.  
 He, who has given thee thirty-six types of ambrosial  
 foods,  
 He, who has made places within your body to contain  
 them,  
 He, who has given you the earth, the place, the goods  
 for use,  
 Place thy heart at the Feet of that Lord.  
 He, who has given thee eyes to see and ears to hear  
 He, who has given thee hands to work, nose to smell  
 and tongue to taste,  
 He, who has given thee feet to walk and made the head  
 (above),  
 O mortal ! worship the Feet of that Lord.  
 He, who has made thee pure out of the impurities,  
 And placed thee above all the species,  
 It is for thee now to improve thyself or not  
 O mortal ! meditate on the Lord for setting thy affairs  
 aright.  
 He is the only One in this and the next world,  
 Wherever we see, He is there,  
 The heart becomes sluggish in serving Him,  
 Without whom we cannot do even for a moment.  
 I am the sinner, without any virtue,  
 I have no service or deed to my credit,  
 By great fortune, I have come across the Guru's ship,  
 Through which, a stone like me, has been able to cross  
 the world-ocean.*

(Ramkali M. 5, p. 913)<sup>17</sup>



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## YAMA—THE GOD OF DEATH

Yama, the god of death, according to Hindu mythology, holds charge of several hells, which are mentioned in the Puranas. Whereas the god of destruction is Shiva; Yama, as god of death acts as deputy of Shiva. His vehicle is a buffalo and he is followed by two four-eyed dogs, who are said to drag the unwilling souls into hell. The scribe (clerk) of Yama is Chitragupta, who keeps the record of good and bad actions of the mortal. Chitragupta is said to be one person by some, but by others he is split into two persons, Chitra and Gupta. One of them records only good deeds and the other only bad deeds. When the mortal is presented before Yama by his messengers (*Jamdooti*), the scribes Chitra and Gupta read out both good and bad actions, which are weighed in a balance. If the balance goes against the mortal, he is taken to hell, where he is tortured according to the orders of Yama.

In some Pauranic accounts the number of hells are said to be seven, but in *Bhagavata Purana* they are said to be twenty-eight. In each hell, a particular kind of sinner is tortured. Some of the hells are as follows :

1. *Tamisra* : There is darkness here, where the robbers and adulterers are tortured.
2. *Andhatamisra* : This is the hell of greater darkness, where the egoists are punished.
3. *Raurva* : In this hell, Ruru, more cruel than serpents, tears those who wantonly hurt creatures.
4. *Kumbhipaka* : Here cruel men are boiled in oil.
5. *Kalasutra* : The sinful Brahmins endure agonies in this hell.

6. *Asipatravana* : It is a hell for heretics.
7. *Sukramukha* : It is a hell for cruel kings.
8. *Andhakupa* : It is a hell of sleeplessness for the killers of blood-sucking insects.
9. *Krimibhojana* : The selfish and inhospitable people are transformed into worms, where they eat one another.
10. *Taptasurmi* : The souls are torn into pieces by red-hot pincers in this hell for the sin of simony.
11. *Vajrakantaka* : A hell for those who marry outside their caste.
12. *A sea of burning filth* : for sexual perverts.
13. *Avichimat* : Those who give false evidence are hurled into this pit repeatedly.
14. *Suchimukha* : A hell for misers.
15. *Vaitarani* : This is a stream, which goes round all the infernal regions. The rulers, who sow dissensions amongst religious chiefs are also thrown in it. This stream is full of faeces, urine, pus, blood, bones, flesh, marrow etc.

The above-mentioned hells are just some of the instances of the burning furnaces for the punishment of various kinds of sinners. In the abode of Yama, there are thousands of hells for different purposes. They are under the charge of Yama, who not only gives punishment to sinners in various hells, he also acts as 'Dharmaraja'.

The above-mentioned Pauranic divisions of hells was the current belief in Hindu Society, when Guru Nanak Dev came on the scene. The path of devotion was considered as the surest means of going to heaven. There were five Bhakti cults prevalent at that time. They were Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, Ganapatyaism and Shauryaism. The followers of these cults adored Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Ganesha and Surya as the Ultimate Authority. These gods were considered as manifestations of Immanent Brahman (*Sarguna Brahman*). But Guru Nanak Dev considering Immanent Brahman as related to 'Maya' preached only the

devotion for Transcendent Brahman (*Nirguna Brahm*), who is the non-Temporal and non-Spatial Lord. He wanted all the souls to be absorbed in love and devotion of 'Akal' (non-Temporal Lord). Since we live in an ephemeral world, the world of birth and death, where Yama (the god of death) rules, his authority and his powers were fully depicted, so as the mortal may become alert and cautious, avoid the punishment and absorb himself in devotion for the Lord. Since the target of unification with the Lord was fixed, the mortal had to avoid the path leading to heaven or hell, always performing such actions, which may make him worthy of the embrace of the Lord.

### Yama as Dharmaraja

According to the Sikh Scripture, Yama, whose attendants/messengers go to bring the souls in his presence acts as 'Dharmaraja'—the god of Justice. Guru Amar Das says :

*There is a Command from Lord-God for the  
Dharmaraja to administer true justice.*

*The evil souls, which are absorbed in duality, are  
under thy rule.*

*But those who are the treasure of divine virtues and  
meditate on the One Lord in their mind, the  
Dharmaraja remains at their service.*

(Sri Raga M. 3, pp. 38-39)<sup>1</sup>

*The couriers of Dharmaraja do not go near the  
beloved men of God.*

(Nat M. 4, p. 980)<sup>2</sup>

*Dharmaraja is a friend of such persons.*

(Var Maru M. 3, p. 1091)<sup>3</sup>

*When the Dharmaraja shall call for account, there  
← will be heavy balance against the errant soul.....when  
← it will be bound down.*

(Maru Kabir, p. 1104)<sup>4</sup>

Kabir cautions the errant soul, when he says :

*What face you will show to Dharmaraja when he will  
← ask you for account.*

(Maru Kabir, p. 1106)<sup>5</sup>

Guru Nanak Dev has said that

*Whosoever forgets the Name of the Lord, he has to pay up the balance of his actions according to the decision of the Dharmaraja.* (Maru M. 1, p. 1029)<sup>6</sup>

*He, on whom the Lord is Graceful and makes him absorbed in His Name, he does not even owe an iota to the Dharmaraja.* (Suhi Kabir, p. 793)<sup>7</sup>

*On remembering the Name of the Lord, there shall not be any punishment of Yama and the Couriers of Dharmaraja will not spy on him.*

(Gauri Guareri M. 5, p. 185)<sup>8</sup>

While talking about a sinful ascetic, Guru Ramdas has said :

*Dharmaraja has told the attendant that he should take him and throw him in that pit of hell, where there are the greatest of the great murderers.*

(Gauri ki Var M. 4, p. 316)<sup>9</sup>

## **Yama, the Chastiser**

### **1. The fear of Yama**

*Yama, though the god of justice, is also the keeper of hells, therefore he is greatly feared as the Chastiser, who gives punishment for the sinful actions. It is only through Lord's meditation, that the fear of death is removed in an instant.* (Gujri M. 5, p. 500)<sup>10</sup>

*It is only through the remembrance of the Name of the Lord, that the fear of Yama is removed.*

(Dhanasari M. 5, p. 679)<sup>11</sup>

*One feels comfortable, when the fear of Yama is removed and the affliction of ego comes to an end.*

(Nat M. 5, p. 978)<sup>12</sup>

*When the fear of death enters the mind, the mortal clings to the shelter of the Lord.*

(Jaitsri M. 9, p. 703)<sup>13</sup>

2. *The weapons of Yama, which create fear :*

- (a) The Mace or Club of Yama : The words 'dand' and 'thengaa' have been used in Sikh Scripture for mace, club or cudgel. This mace or club of Yama falls on the head of the mortal at the time of death.

*When the mace of death falls on the head, everything is settled in a moment.* (Asa Kabir, p. 479)<sup>14</sup>

*When the club of death falls on the head, only then the mortal awakes.* (Gaund Kabir, p. 870)<sup>15</sup>

*The fear of the death of the materialist is not removed and the club of Yama ever hangs over his head.*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1030)<sup>16</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur addresses the mortal in this way :

*When the mace of Yama falls over your head, only then thou awakest from slumber.*

(Maru M. 9, p. 1008)<sup>17</sup>

- (b) The Noose of Yama : The words 'Phaha', 'Phahi', 'Phaas', 'Phaasi', 'Jevra', 'Jevri', 'Sangal' etc. have been used for 'noose' in the Sikh Scripture. The mortal is bound down at the time of death. Guru Nanak Dev says :

*When the club of Yama strikes and the neck is entrapped in chains, the five ones run away at that time.* (Gauri Cheti M. 1, p. 155)<sup>18</sup>

*He, who has given him the soul and body and also gives him sustenance, he does not remember Him at all, therefore the noose of Yama is not cut off from his neck and he continues to transmigrate repeatedly.*

(Sri Raga ki Var M. 4, Salok M. 3, p. 85)<sup>19</sup>

*The Guruward reflects on this essence that only the True Guru can snap the noose of Yama.*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1029)<sup>20</sup>

### **The Conjunctive Words used alongwith the Word 'Yama'**

1. One of the words is 'Kankar', which is a derivative from the Sanskrit word 'Kinkar', which means the servant or attendant. Therefore 'Jam Kankar' means the servant or attendant of Yama.
2. Another word used is 'Doot', which means the messenger or envoy, therefore the conjunctive word 'Jamdoot' means the messenger or envoy of Yama.
3. Another word is 'Jandaar', which if considered a derivative of the Arabic word 'Jund', means 'Commander' and conveys the sense of 'Dharmaraja' for Yama. If considered a derivative of Persian, it means 'a wretch' or a 'rascal'. It is used in the sense of 'abominable personality' for Yama.
4. Another word used alongwith Yama is 'Jagaati', which as 'Jagaat' is a derivative from the Arabic word 'Zakaat' meaning tax. Thus 'Jagaati' is a tax-collector. According to Guru Amar Das such a toll is levied on harbourers of duality. (Majh M. 3, p. 127). It is said that besides Yama, who settles the account of actions and sends the souls further through his emissaries to the hells, there are such tax-collectors on the path, whose demands are also to be satisfied. The charges are made by those, who ferry across 'Vaitarani', the stream of blood and pus.

### **The Symbols used for Yama**

1. Though Yama has been called 'Dharmaraja' (the king of Justice), he is also called Yamaraja (Yama—the King). He is virtually the king of his own territory, whom the powers have been delegated by Lord-God for Justice and chastisement. His territory is called Jam-Puri (The abode of Yama) or Jampur (The City of Yama). Since the hells are working under his direct surveillance, they are seen distinctly from afar through their portals,



known as Jama-Dar (the portals of Yama). Those bound down by Yama for punishment are taken within those portals.

2. Another symbol used for Yama is that of the Tom-cat or male cat (Jam-Manjaar = Yama, the male cat). While addressing the Lord, Kabir says :

*Thou art the cage and I am Thy parrot, what can the male cat of death do unto me ?*

(Gauri Kabir, p. 323)<sup>21</sup>

Kabir has also said :

*The Lord-God has created the poor man as a mouse and the cat of death devours him.*

(Bilawal Kabir, p. 855)<sup>22</sup>

3. Another symbol used for Yama is that of the mouse. Guru Ram Das says :

*The day dawns and it dwindles away, then the night comes and all of it also passes away. Thus the age goes on decreasing, but the man does not comprehend this fact and the mouse of death is ever gnawing at the rope of life.*

(Sri Raga M. 4, p. 41)<sup>23</sup>

4. Yama the chastiser is also depicted as a 'Daitya' (demon).

*The egocentrics and self-willed people die again and again. The Yama as a demon destroys them and they have to enter the portal of the city of Yama for further chastisement.*

(Basant M. 4, p. 1178)<sup>24</sup>

5. Yama is also identified with a hunter. According to Kabir :

*Yama walks around like a hunter and a killer; tell me, what method should be adopted for escape ?*

(Dhanasari Kabir, p. 691)<sup>25</sup>

6. Yama is also the torturing thorn. Guru Arjan Dev says :

*The shelter of Lord-God's feet is my citadel, the*

*torturing thorn of Yama cannot remove it."*

(Suhi M. 5, p. 742)<sup>26</sup>

7. Yama is also like a savage animal or a poisonous serpent.

*Yama roams about like a poisonous serpent gaping wide its mouth.*

(Sorath M. 9, p. 631)<sup>27</sup>

8. Yama as death has been likened to that shore, which erodes like the bank of a river.

(Salok Farid, p. 1383)<sup>28</sup>

9. Yama is also a mouse cutting the bough of life.

(Gauri ki Var, M. 4, p. 304)<sup>29</sup>

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## THE PATH OF YAMA AND THE CITY OF YAMA

The messengers of Yama, marked for taking away the soul of a particular individual, leave the city of Yama and traversing their particular path, reach the abode of that individual. There are some descriptions of the path and also of the city of Yama in the Sikh Scripture. The path has been called 'Jam-mag', 'Jam-marag' or 'Jam-Panth'. Talking about 'Jam-Panth', the Maharashtrian saint Trilochan says :

*O mortal ! Thou hast to tread immensely strenuous and formidable path, on which the sun and the moon do not enter. When thou shalt leave the world, thou shalt forget the attachment of maya. On that day, it will become manifest on the mind that 'Dharmaraja' (the Righteous Judge) ever scans the mortals. There his mighty messengers squeeze the mortals within their hands, it is not possible to withstand them.*

(Sri Raga Trilochan, p. 92)<sup>1</sup>

In one of his 'Dirges' Guru Nanak Dev has given a more distinct and comprehensible description of the path in the following words :

*The path of Yama is not easily discernible, it is desolate, dismal and utterly dark. There is no water there, no quilts, no mattresses, there are no different types of food. There are no cooked meals and no cold water, no respect and no embellished garments. One*

*is enchained there, when Yama's messengers stand over the head, no house or shelter is seen there."*

(Wadhans M. 1, p. 581)<sup>4</sup>

Guru Nanak Dev, at another place, says :

*(The mammon-worshipper), after leaving the world has to cross the river of fire, emitting poisonous flames and there will be none else except the lonely 'Jiva' (soul). The ocean of fire emits bitterly hostile waves producing hissing sound and the egocentric falls in it and is consumed.*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1026)<sup>5</sup>

In his masterpiece 'Sukhmani' Guru Arjan Dev has depicted some of the significant features of the path. He says that On This Path—

1. Thou shalt not find the mother, the father, the son, the friend and the brother.<sup>4</sup>
2. The most terrible messenger of Yama crushes you there.<sup>5</sup>
3. Thou shalt face very great hardships there.<sup>6</sup>
4. Thou shalt go there all alone.<sup>7</sup>
5. Innumerable mighty arms shall not be able to save thee there.<sup>8</sup>
6. Many misfortunes shall befall thee and ruin thee there.<sup>9</sup>
7. Its distance will remain immeasurable.<sup>10</sup>
8. During the journey, there will be very great pitch darkness.<sup>11</sup>
9. There will be no acquaintance of thine there.<sup>12</sup>
10. There will be very great heat there<sup>13</sup> and
11. The thirst sucks out thy breath there.<sup>14</sup>

This is what the saints and Gurus say in the Sikh Scripture about the 'Underworld'. These great spiritualists had a very clear vision about the upper regions i.e. the 'heavens' and the lower region i.e. the 'Underworld' or the Yama's territory of 'hells'. The persons having 'Out of Body' experience have mostly the same type of experience of seeing the welcoming light at the end of the tunnel, but this

is not the case with all the dying persons. Those people, who did not remain under discipline and did not follow the ethical code and acted under the impact of ego and greed, their 'near-death experiences' are not pleasant. They are not sent to the upper regions, but instead are taken away to the 'Underworld' and are chastised in the burning flames of hells. These regions of the 'Underworld' are called 'Jampur' or 'Jampuri'. All types of sinners are taken there. The last moments of these people are very frightening and when they pass away from this world, they are subjected to various types of punishments in the hells. Whereas their souls are severed from their bodies by shattering the bones (Salok Farid, p. 1377),<sup>15</sup> when taken to 'Jampuri' (the city of Yama), their necks are enchained (Wadhans M. 1, p. 581)<sup>16</sup> and their faces blackened (Var Asa M. 1, p. 463).<sup>17</sup> The sinners wail and weep and are churned by the 'Dharmaraja' (god of Justice) like the churning-stick. (Salok M. 5, p. 1425).<sup>18</sup>

There are innumerable sufferings in terrible hells, which are the places for the 'ungrateful people' (Var Gauri M. 4, Salok M. 5, p. 315).<sup>19</sup> Innumerable sins are born with the intoxication of the pleasures of the palate, greed and ego. Closing the doors and behind many screens, one enjoys with another's woman, all such accounts become clear before the god of Justice through 'Chitra' and 'Gupta' (Sorath M. 5, p. 616).<sup>20</sup> All such vicious pleasures committed in secrecy drive the sinner to embrace the red-hot pillars. (Maru M. 5, p. 1001).<sup>21</sup> When the mortal is burnt down with ego, he is struck with massive swords in the city of Yama. (Maru M. 1, p. 993).<sup>22</sup>

The old seers of India have recorded the same types of experiences regarding the 'Underworld' like the Gurus and saints of the Sikh Scripture. Such persons, who have violated the discipline of a 'good life' and have fallen in sinful actions under the impact of various temptations, the hands of demons reach them at the time of death. They are moved away to the city of Yama for chastisement.

According to the Puranas the actions of a mortal in this

world take him to the befitting regions in the next world. The paths leading to the hells in the city of Yama are very dreadful to behold. They are said to extend to one lakh and sixty-four thousand miles. There are twenty-eight major infernal regions, which are said to be situated even under the seven nether-worlds. Each region is said to be divided into one hundred and forty-four chambers and each chamber is under the charge of five horrible-looking guards, who cast their wards in terrible places of punishment. The moaning and screaming sounds emanate from each region.

A hymn of Guru Arjan Dev very clearly explains the Sikh view regarding 'sin' and 'hell'. According to him :

*Those who commit sins are definitely robbed, Azrail or Yama seizes them and tortures them, the Creator-Lord put them in hell and the Righteous Judge asks them to render the account. No brother or sister accompanies them. They go away leaving behind their property, youth and wealth. They did not know their Gracious and Beneficent Creator and are crushed like the sesame in the oil-press. He snatches away happily whatever belongs to others, but the Creator-Lord sees and hears him. He has fallen in the pit because of the worldly greed and does not know anything about the future. He takes birth and dies repeatedly and suffers great punishment on his way to a distant country. The blind one does not know Him, who has created him, therefore he (the mortal) is subjected to suffering.* (Maru M. 5, pp. 1019-20)<sup>23</sup>

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(ਮਾਰੂ ਮ: ੫, ਪੰਨੇ 1019-20)

## DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD

Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh Religion, during his four missionary journeys went to all the major religious centres and held discussions with their votaries. He was acquainted with the life-styles of all the peoples. It is really very interesting to note that he even knew the various modes adopted by them for the disposal of their dead. In one of his Saloks he has written :

*Some are cremated, some are buried  
Some are eaten by dogs  
Some are thrown in the water and  
Some are cast into the tower of silence.*

(Salok M. 1, p. 648)<sup>1</sup>

During the time of Guru Nanak Dev, the Muslims were the rulers of India. They had entered India, earlier through Sind and later on through the Khyber Pass in the North-west. There was clash of two different cultures. The Hindus were the idol-worshippers and the Muslims were the idol-breakers. Guru Arjan Dev has mentioned some of their distinctive features in one of his hymns. He says :

*Some utter the Name of the Lord as 'Ram'  
And some utter it as 'Khuda'  
Some serve Him as 'Gosain'  
And some serve Him as 'Allah'.....  
Some take a bath at Hindu pilgrim stations  
And some go for a pilgrimage to Mecca  
Some perform Hindu worship  
And some bow their heads in the Muslim way*

*Some study the Vedas  
 And some study the Muslim Scriptures  
 Some wear blue garments  
 And some wear the white clothes  
 Someone calls himself a Muslim  
 And someone calls himself a Hindu  
 Someone desires for the (Muslim) paradise  
 And someone desires for the (Hindu) heaven  
 He, who recognises the Will of the Lord,  
 He only knows the secret of Lord-God.*

(Ramkali M. 5, p. 885)<sup>2</sup>

With regard to death of both Hindus and Muslims, Kabir has said :

*The Hindus have died worshipping the idols  
 And Muslims have died bowing their heads  
 The Hindus cremate their dead and the Muslims  
 bury them,  
 Both of them have not been able to comprehend Thee,  
 O Lord !*

(Sorath Kabir, p. 654)<sup>3</sup>

In these verses Kabir discriminates the two communities regarding the disposal of their dead.

## **The Hindus**

*The Hindus cremate their dead, but before and after the cremation they also perform several rituals for the dead.* Since the Hindus believe in the continuous process of birth and death, the funeral rites are thought to help the deceased. For purging the soul from any type of sin, the consecrated food is prepared in rituals called 'Shraada'. It is important for a person to die while lying on the ground and his head should point towards the magnetic north. The funeral rites are to be performed by the next of kin. A lighted lamp (*diya*) is to be placed by the side of the dead, close to his head. Some 'pindas' (small cakes made of wheat flour, sugar and linseed)

are also to be placed. Some mantras including the Gayatri mantra are chanted. Then the next of kin strews the body with flowers or dry grass (*kusha* or *darbha*), he also sprinkles water on the body. Then the water of river Ganges in which the leaves of 'tulsi' (an aromatic plant) have been soaked, is poured in the dead person's mouth with the recitation of mantra. Then a wreath of 'tulsi' is placed around the dead man's neck, his forehead is smeared with sandalpaste and small pieces of sandalwood are scattered on other parts of the body. Some portion of ghee is also offered. Then the ritual of 'Havan Samagri' is performed. After this a cocoanut, taking out its milk and filled with ghee and linseed is placed on the dead person's forehead. A priest is called for the rituals. Then the body is washed and dressed. It is then taken to the cremation ground or a crematorium in a procession, where the congregation chants the mantras and puts the body on the funeral pyre. The next of kin lights the fire. When the cremation is over, the members of the congregation walk back to the family home, where the time and period of bereavement (*shok* or *afsos*) is fixed. After sometime the ashes of the dead are immersed in Ganges or other waters considered sacred.

According to Guru Nanak Dev, the final act in the life is the cremation of the body. (Var Majh M. 1, p. 138)<sup>4</sup>. Since Guru Nanak Dev was born and brought up in Hindu society, he has mentioned such rituals regarding death in his verses. According to him his 'diva' (lamp) is only the Name of the Lord, whose light dries up the oil of suffering and only the Lord Himself is his 'pind' (barley-roll) and 'patal' (leafy-plate). (Asa M. 1, p. 358).<sup>5</sup>

## The Muslims

*The Muslims also believe that there is life after death and this utterance from the holy mouth of the Prophet is very important : "The first stage of the journey to eternity is the grave," because there will be the resurrection of the dead on*

*the Day of Judgement. The Muslims thus do not cremate their dead and only bury them in cemeteries.* The dead is put in the grave in such a way that he faces towards the Ka'abah. The verses from the holy Quran are recited by the deathbed of the dying person. Such recitation is stopped, when the person dies and his eyes are closed. The outstanding debts of the dead person are then paid by a family friend. The loud lamentation is forbidden. Then the body is washed by the relatives of the deceased or a Muslim with water, or with sand, if water is not available. There are certain directions for this 'ghusl' (washing). Then the body is shrouded according to the directions. After that the dead body is carried through the streets on a bier by the grief-stricken people and while going, they chant the 'shahadah' (testimony), being led by the priest (Imam). The grave should be roomy and deep, wherein the body is laid. Then the grave is covered. After that all the mourners go back and the dead person is usually condoled for three days and nights. When forty days are passed after death, a memorial service is held, wherein several litanies are recited.

Sheikh Baba Farid's hymns contain a short references of the grave. He says :

*O Farid ! Do not slander the dust, because there is nothing so great as dust; when the person is alive, the dust is under his feet, but when he is dead, it is over and above him.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1378)<sup>6</sup>

He says again :

*O Farid ! The lowly grave calls out, O homeless, come to thy home; thou shalt ultimately come to me, therefore do not fear death.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1382)<sup>7</sup>

In another Salok he has said :

*O Farid, the mansions have become empty and the abode of the persons is now under the earth; those lowly graves will now be occupied by the souls.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1382)<sup>8</sup>

This Salok presents the Muslim concept that after death the souls also abide with the bodies in the graves.

Guru Nanak Dev met the Zoroastrians in Persia and also in India, where they had come from Persia via Gujrat and mostly settled in Bombay. He also met the Christians in Palestine and also in India, where some of them had come by sea and settled in the vicinity of Madras.

### **The Zoroastrians**

*In the time of Guru Nanak, they exposed their dead on the towers, where their flesh was picked at by vultures, leaving only the bone skeleton. The word 'dakhma' prevalent amongst the Zoroastrians means 'grave' and the word 'hasan' used in India means 'a well', both these words, in fact, pertain to the 'tower of silence'. But there seems to have been a period, when merely the mountainside or wilderness was considered alright, where the flesh of the dead was torn off by the dogs and other animals.*

The Zoroastrians consider the dead body as unclean, therefore it should not come into contact with the earth.

The common practice amongst the Jews and the Christians had been the burial of their dead; they have their cemeteries like the Muslims. The Jainas, the Buddhists and the Sikhs like Hindus cremate their dead on the Indian scene, but the modern trends in other countries have made the burial as well as cremation acceptable amongst various peoples. In nearly all the religious societies, the funeral ceremony is divided into three parts; the first part is the vigil at home, the second part consists of the litany or recital of the religious texts and the third part is the disposal of dead either by cremation or by burial in the grave. Those who cremate their dead, also bury the mortal remains, except in India, where the ashes are immersed in sacred waters etc.

*In India, sometimes the body is consigned to the waters of the river, if a wish has been expressed by the dying person. The saintly persons sometimes want that their dead body may*

*also be of some use to others and thus they want it to be eaten by the fish or other water-animals. When a person commits suicide, his body is said to become inappropriate for the 'agni-sanskar'. In such a case, if he is not buried, he may be slipped into a river.*

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## HEAVEN AND HELL

Since there is a general belief in life after death in most of the religions, the soul receives good or bad reward in the next world according to its actions in this world. The account is prepared of all the actions, which is presented before Dharmaraja (the god of Justice) by the scribes, who are present with every soul. The Hindus have named them Chitra and Gupta and Muslims call them Munkar and Nakir. One of them records the good conduct and the other keeps the account of evil actions. The Hindus believe that the messengers of Yama take the soul directly to Dharmaraja for his decision, but according to the Muslims the souls stay with their bodies in the graves and their reward will be announced on the Day of Judgement, where the holy Prophet will also be present. The souls with record of good actions will be sent to Heaven and those who had performed evil deeds will be thrown into the hell.

There are several Heavens and Hells, which are differentiated according to the nature of Karmas. One reaps the fruit of his Karmas in heaven or hell. A description of hells is found in 'Markandeya Purana'. After reaping the fruit of his actions in heaven, one is born again on the earth as a human being. The punishment in hell is followed by several births in animal kingdom on land and sea. One may be born as a four-legged animal, as a crawling serpent, as a flying bird, as a small insect or as a being in water. All these lives are like hells. Thus the sinners undergo punishment in eighty-four lakhs of births (or hells) in accordance with their actions (Maru M. 1, p. 1028).<sup>1</sup> The Muslims believe that on the last day of Judgement, God will

send the faithful to heaven and the sinners to hell. There is a good deal of difference in the concepts of heaven and hell in Hinduism, Islam and other religions. The Sikh concept is quite different. A Sikh neither desires to go to heaven nor fears hell (Gauri Kabir, p. 337)<sup>2</sup>. He rejects both of them (Ramkali Kabir, p. 969)<sup>3</sup>. According to the Sikh Scripture, one goes to heaven or hell because of ego (Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 278)<sup>4</sup> and actions in the world of three 'gunas' (Asa M. 5, p. 389)<sup>5</sup>. The actions in the world of three 'gunas' are both good and bad. Within the fold of ego, one can be both truthful and sinful (Var Asa M. 1, p. 466),<sup>6</sup> but a Sikh has to rise above both types of actions in order to escape transmigration (Majh M. 3, p. 126)<sup>7</sup> and, therefore, he has to discard both heaven and hell.

With the concept of sin are associated the concepts of devil and hell. The devil is not a separate ultimate entity as we find in Zoroastrianism; according to Sikhism he works under the Will of Lord-God. According to Guru Amar Dass, there are orders of Lord-God for Dharmaraja to administer true justice (Sri Raga M. 3, pp. 38-39)<sup>8</sup>. The Indian equivalent for the hell is 'Naraka'. It is a place of torture for evildoers. Manu has enumerated twenty-one hells. Other authorities vary greatly regarding the numbers and the names of the hells. Twenty-eight different divisions of the hell are described. They are said to be situated below 'Patala', where there is darkness and terror. The keepers of these hells have the faces of jackals, cats, vultures, owls etc. But these hells are not the places of eternal suffering. After the due punishment, the souls take birth according to their Karmas. The Muslim use the word 'Dozakh' for hell. Seven divisions of hell have been described in the Muslim Commentaries :

1. Jahannum, the purgatorial hell
2. Laza, the blazing fire
3. Al-Hutamsh, an intense fire
4. Saeer, a flaming fire
5. Sagar, a scorching fire

6. Al-Jahim, a huge hot fire and

7. Hawiyah, a bottomless pit

Different types of souls categorised by their actions are sent to different hells. Both the words 'Naraka' and 'Dozakh' have been used in the Sikh Scripture. Guru Nanak Dev says :

*One is drowned in the dark well of 'Naraka'.....the worshipper of maya passes through hells of eighty-four lakh species.*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1028)<sup>9</sup>

Guru Arjan Dev says :

*How can he be saved from 'Dozakh', who does not keep the Prophet in his mind.*

(Var Gauri M. 4, pp. 319-20)<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish hell depicts the sinners being tormented by the angels of destruction. Some are suspended by their eyelids, some by their ears, some by their tongues, some by their feet. The black worms crawl all over the bodies of the sinners.

The Indian equivalent for heaven is 'Svarga'. Out of the fourteen worlds, seven upper and seven nether, which constitute the whole universe, 'Svarga' or 'Svah' is one of the seven upper worlds. According to the Hindu belief, one enjoys material happiness in this world as a reward for his meritorious actions on earth. It is the heaven of Indra and is supposed to be situated on Mount Meru. In the post-Vedic mythology 'Vaikunth' is the name given to the heaven of Vishnu, which is eternal and built of gold and precious stones. In the Sikh Scripture, both the words 'Svarga' (*Surg*) and 'Vaikunth' (*Baikunth*) have been used, but the concept of such heaven has been rejected. The God-man (*Gurmukh*) does not want to reside in heaven (Maru M. 5, p. 1078).<sup>11</sup> For an enlightened person, the holy congregation is a heaven (Bhairo Kabir, p. 1161).<sup>12</sup> Islam believes in seven heavens, through which the Prophet passed during 'meraj' (nocturnal journey). These are :

1. The heaven of pure silver, where Adam resides

2. The heaven of pure gold, where John the Baptist and Jesus reside
3. The heaven of pearls belonging to Joseph
4. The heaven of white gold of Enoch
5. The heaven of silver of Aaron
6. The heaven of ruby and garnet of Moses and
7. The heaven of Abraham.

Heaven is also called 'Jannat' by Muslims, a term used for the regions of celestial bliss. In the Paradise, the faithful is served by beautiful damsels, called 'houries' with large dark eyeballs. The word 'Bhisht' (*Bahisht*) is used in the Sikh Scripture for Muslim heaven. The Jewish heaven consists of five halls for each of the five types of the saved ones. One of the halls is of cedar with a crystal ceiling, the second of cedar with a silver ceiling for those who repented in time, the third of silver and gold studded with pearls for the choicest, the fourth of olive-wood for martyrs and the fifth of gold and silver studded with precious stones for the Messiah or the redeemer.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), wrote his book *Heaven and Hell* in 1757, which embodies the result of thirteen years of his experience. He states that the sensory powers of his spirit were opened, which enabled him to have conscious perception of the spiritual world. According to him, there are three heavens entirely distinct from each other. The whole heaven viewed collectively is in the human form. Hell is divided into societies in the same manner as heaven. As to the number of hells, there are as many as there are angelic societies in the heaven. The hells are so distinctly arranged in order, according to the differences of every evil, that nothing could be more perfectly ordered or more distinct.

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## REINCARNATION

The Indian Religions not only believe in reincarnation, they also believe in transmigration. There is a firm belief amongst the Sikhs that the advanced souls incarnate again and again for the welfare of humanity. In one of hymns, Guru Arjan Dev says:

*O Lord ! Thy saints are fortunate, who have the wealth  
of Lord's Name*

*Their coming has the Lord's approval and their  
actions are fruitful*

*O my Lord ! I am a sacrifice to this God-man  
Waving my hair as whisk over them,*

*I apply their feet-dust on my face  
Being above birth and death, these philanthropists  
have come*

*They give spiritual life and devotion and enable men  
to meet God*

*Their command and kingdom are true, being  
absorbed in True Lord*

*Their happiness and praises are true, they know Him,  
whom they belong*

*I wave fan and bring water for them and grind corn  
for this God-man*

*I supplicate to the Lord to bless me with the sight of  
these men, saith Nanak.*

(Suhi M. 5, pp. 748-49)<sup>1</sup>

Such sacrificing souls come for the welfare of humanity. They are ever 'Jivan-muktas'. They are sent to the world to perform the acts of amelioration and redemption of others,

who are entrapped in the fearful sea of existence. The Gurus, great saints and persons of heightened states of consciousness come in this category. Such people are clairvoyants. Their third eye remains open and they can observe the past, present and future of the individuals, who come to them. When we study the lives of the Sikh Gurus, we come across several incidents, in which the past lives and coming lives of the disciples have been mentioned.

Guru Gobind Singh, in his autobiography, entitled 'Apni Katha', in the beginning of 'Bachittar Natak' in the *Dasam Granth* has made a mention of his previous life, when he was busy in contemplation on Lord-God at Hemkunt mountain, he was Commanded by the Non-Temporal Lord to take birth on the earth for welfare of humanity. During his lifetime, he created Khalsa and on several occasions, he predicted the next life of some of his beloved Sikhs. One day he went to the village Awal Kheri, where an old lady recognising him caught hold of his horse and requested him to bless her with some service. She said, "O True King ! Have something to eat." The Guru signed her to bring whatever she wanted to serve. The old woman brought a great pitcher full of milk, which was quaffed by all the Sikhs present there. Then the Sikhs asked, "We have seen such a great faith of this old woman." The Guru then said, addressing Bhai Udai Singh, "She will give birth to an adept; she will be born in the house of a Jat, the name of her son will be Jaman Jati." Then Udai Singh asked, "Where is he now ?" The Guru said silently, "Fateh Singh will go there; this will be according to the Will of God." Then Udai Singh asked in wonder, "Tell me about my future." The Guru said, "You will be the Chief of the Sikhs for four times and on the fifth time, when the thirteenth century Hijri will have passed 80 years forward, when the English will be gone for the last time and when he will be born as the son of an Aalmi Rajput, he will come for the support of the Khalsa." The reader can see from this anecdote that the next birth of the old woman with her son

Jaman Jati and the five coming births of Bhai Udai Singh have been foretold. It will be quite interesting to note that Jaman Jati actually took birth and was the founder of the Islamic sect of 'Malangs'. It may be seen in the entry entitled 'Malang' in the *Dictionary of Islam* by Thomas Patrick Hughes.

There are some religions, like Islam, which do not believe in the soul's journey beyond the grave, therefore the concept of 'reincarnation' is repugnant to them. But the rationalists amongst them are beginning to accept those cases, in which the memory of the previous life remains strong in the mind of a budding child. The case of such a child is suggestive of reincarnation. A good deal of investigation has taken place on this front. It is of course, generally recognised that in the case of violent deaths, the distinct memories are carried forward from one life to another. The strong impressions are not only left on the souls, but on their bodies, which carry the marks also of fatal wounds.

The idea of reincarnation was made widely known in the Western world by the Theosophical Society by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in the second half of the nineteenth century. Madame Blavatsky produced her remarkable work entitled *The Secret Doctrine*, which was published in 1888. She wrote this work in a heightened state of consciousness. Theosophy was further popularised by Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, Jinarajadasa and others. In his work entitled *The Soul's Growth Through Reincarnation*, C.W. Leadbeater, has described successive incarnation of a number of different souls. One such soul is 'Erato', whose most recent birth was that of John Varley, an English landscape-painter, and who was a disciple of Madama Blavatsky. Leadbeater has mentioned seventeen of his lives, in which he was born as a man ten times and as a woman seven times. At one time he was a Chinese, at another an Indian, then a European, then a Japanese, then an Eskimo, then a South American and then an Egyptian. At one time he was an inhabitant of the submerged continent of Atlantic.



His very first life mentioned by Leadbeater was in Chaldea in 19,245 BC. The average length of each life was 55 and a half years and average period between each incarnation was 1264 years. It is, of course, a very interesting study.

It is not necessary that a man may remain a man in his next life, he can become a woman, and a woman may become a man in her next birth, if the karmic influences demand it. Of course, we do not find such examples in the blessings of the Gurus in Sikh Religion. However it is emphatically recorded in the Sikh Scripture :

*Such is our Lord-God, who turns a woman into a man  
and a man into a woman*

*Kabir says that God is the Beloved of His saints and  
I am a sacrifice to Him.* (Sarang Kabir, p. 1252)<sup>2</sup>

It is also recorded in the hymn of the Maharashtrian saint Trilochan that a man, who remembers a woman at the time of his death, he is born as a prostitute. (Gujri Trilochan, p. 526).<sup>3</sup>

The journey of the soul is endless, unless one gets emancipated. The chain of the lives of a soul continues and it is said that the soul gets further opportunities for its growth in its various incarnations. This world is a testing ground for the soul, wherein new relations are created and the individual becomes an actor in various plays. Guru Nanak Dev has beautifully depicted this journey of the soul in the following verses :

*After union, the separation comes and after separation  
the union. After living the span of life, the death comes  
and after death the life. He becomes the father of  
many and the son of many, the disciple and preceptor  
of many. Their lives in the past and future are  
countless. Nothing is known what was in the past and  
what will be in the future ?* (Salok M. 1, p. 1238)<sup>4</sup>

In the book entitled *Past Lives, Future Lives*, published by Tudy Piatkus Ltd. (5, Windmill Street, London W1P 1HP)

Jenny Cockell narrates her personal experiences. Her story is believed to be one of the most powerful proofs of the existence of 'reincarnation'. She had memories of her past lives as well as premonitory dreams and waking glimpses of the future since her early childhood. One of her past lives particularly haunted her. It was as Mary Suttons, who died after the delivery of her eighth child in a Dublin Hospital. In another book of hers entitled *Yesterday's Children*, she has described the story of her search for Mary Sutton's family, when she was actually able to trace and meet some of her children from whom she had parted at the time of death.

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## KARMA AND TRANSMIGRATION

The theories of Karma and Transmigration are interlinked. Karma means action. Every Jiva desires, thinks and acts. Every action has its associations in the past, present and future. Every action is like a seed sown in the body, which is a field of action.<sup>1</sup> The soul (*purusha*) is the farmer. It has been given a field in the form of a body. When the seed of action is sown, the consequences must follow. A Jiva repeatedly experiences birth in this world. The theory of Karma can be explained as the moral law of causation.

There are two types of Karmas i.e. Higher Karmas and Lower Karmas. The Lower Karmas i.e. 'Karma Kanda' have been rejected by the Sikh Gurus. They have laid emphasis only on those Karmas, which lead to the realisation of Brahman. From ethical point of view, the Karmas may be good or bad, virtuous or sinful. The remuneration of these Karmas depends on their quality. Whatever one did in his previous birth, that makes his present life. Whatever the seed of actions is sown in the body, the harvest is reaped accordingly. As one sows, so shall he reap.<sup>2</sup> It is futile to slander others for the actions done. The fault lies in one's own actions.<sup>3</sup> Good actions not only bring the appreciation in this world, but also in the presence of the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Bad actions lead towards misery.<sup>5</sup> Bad actions are like a field of poison.<sup>6</sup> A bad person is like a thief. He is punished by the god of Justice.<sup>7</sup> The slander of good people and the worship of the followers of mammon are considered as bad actions.<sup>8</sup> One should perform such actions, by which he may not feel ashamed in the presence of the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

These Karmas are performed according to the Will of

God. God has destined us from the very beginning for certain Karmas. We cannot escape them.<sup>10</sup> At this point a question arises, why should one be rewarded or punished, when one is not responsible for the actions? But a closer consideration of this line of thought brings us to the conclusion that the saint-poets of the 'Adi Granth' could not detach the Karma doctrine from God, as was done by Jaimini, the author of *Purva Mimansa*. Kabir says :

*This Jiva is tied by Karmas, you say,  
But who gave life to Karmas ?* (Gaund Kabir, p. 870)<sup>11</sup>

It is Brahman, who controls our Karmas. This does not mean that we ought to remain passive, because we have been denied even an iota of free-will. In order to rise higher on the spiritual planes, one must get himself attuned to the Will of God.<sup>12</sup> The human being desires, thinks and acts for worldly pleasures, which end in misery.<sup>13</sup> In fact, God has given us good amount of free-will under His Will and those who act according to the Will of God, realise the state of bliss. Others who are worldly-wise undergo births and deaths. The wisdom of an individual is of no use. Everything happens under the Will of God. The attainment of the nectar of Name is the real ideal under the Will of God.<sup>14</sup> The individual can act freely for the attainment of the ideal, therefore great stress is laid on fortitude, which forms the basis of the Grace of the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

The Karmas performed under the influence of 'maya' and ego are the cause of transmigration. Without the attainment of the Name of the Lord, the cycle of births and deaths continues. There are innumerable individual selves taking different physical forms. The words virtue (*punya*) and sin (*paap*) and heaven and hell come in usage after the creation of the world of three 'gunas' (qualities, modes). The virtuous go to heaven and the sinners to hell.<sup>16</sup> The true disciple has no desire of going to heaven. He does not fear hell. He is above virtue and sin, therefore he is above heaven

and hell. Kabir says :

*Which is the hell ? and which is poor heaven ?*

*The saints condemn both.*

*We have nothing to do with any by the Grace of our  
Guru.*

(Ramkali Kabir, p. 969)<sup>17</sup>

The saint, who is above heaven and hell, wishes to remain at the feet of the Lord for all times.<sup>18</sup> Thus we see that heaven is not an ideal for a Sikh. The picture of hell has been depicted in the following manner :

*There is a stream of fire from which emerge poisonous  
flames,*

*There is none else there except the self,*

*The waves of the ocean of fire are aflame.*

*And the sinners are being burnt in them.*

(Maru M. 1, p. 1026)<sup>19</sup>

All the physical forms, through which the soul passes, are hells. Thus there are eighty-four lakhs of hells; there the sinners get due punishment for their deeds. The angels of death take away the sinner before the god of Justice, who is depicted as moneylender (*bania*). The scribes Chitra and Gupta are asked to give an account of the virtuous and sinful acts respectively. Then the god of Justice sends the sinners to hell. Before reaching the god of Justice, the sinner has to pay a toll-tax in the way. This description of hell, god of Justice, Chitra and Gupta etc. is Pauranic, through which the saint-poets of the 'Adi Granth' wanted to create the hatred in the minds of the individuals against bad deeds and inculcate in them the devotion of the Lord, making it quite clear, that even good works could not get the release of the individual self.

Thus the theories of Karma and Transmigration are closely inter-linked. All the orthodox and heterodox Indian Religions except Lokayats (*Charvakas*) believed in these doctrines. The old Egyptians and Greeks also accepted them.

The modern Theosophists have full faith in them. Some people believe that the soul existing from the very beginning takes birth in the world only once. This is the doctrine of pre-existence. Others are of the view that the soul takes birth repeatedly, but is only born as a human-being and is never born as a bird or beast. This is the doctrine of reincarnation. But according to the doctrine of Transmigration, the soul takes various physical forms according to its Karmas. The Indian sages talk of eighty-four lakhs of physical forms. Half of them live in water and the other half on land. In one of his hymns, Guru Arjan Dev has described the various births of a soul :

*The Jiva was born several times as worm and flying insect,  
It was born several times as an elephant, a fish and a deer,  
It was born several times as a bird and a snake,  
It was born several times as a horse and a yoked bull,  
Meet the Lord, this is the opportune time,  
After a very long time, you have come in this body,  
It was born several times as a stone and a mountain,  
It was born several times as germs,  
It was born several times as plants,  
It strayed into eighty-four lakhs of physical forms.*

(Gauri M. 5, p. 176)<sup>20</sup>

Jiva experiences bondage, when it enters the field of action. Every action enchains him further.<sup>21</sup> It tightens the noose around his neck.<sup>22</sup> There are further three kinds of Karmas : *Sanchit*, *Prarabdha* and *Aagami*. The Karma, which is ripe for reaping is called *Prarabdha*. The accumulated Karmas of the past are *Sanchit*, and the *Aagami* or *Kriyamaan* Karmas are the present Karmas, when the good are to be performed and bad to be avoided. 'Sanchit Karma' manifests itself in the form of character. The chain of births and deaths ceases only on the exhaustion of 'Prarabdha Karmas'. The tie that binds Jiva to the wheel of

births and deaths is desire.<sup>23</sup> In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, it is written, "When all the desires concealed in the heart, come to an end, the mortal becomes immortal and enjoys Brahman here."

Transmigration ceases with the exhaustion of desire. But the desire (*Trishna*) comes to an end, when we meet the knower of Brahman (*Brahm-Giani*) and act according to his instructions :

*The fear of births and deaths ceases with the perfect knowledge imparted by the Perfect Man.*

*We stray no more, our wanderings cease, on listening to the Praises of the Lord, saith Nanak.*

(Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 287)<sup>24</sup>

Trilochan, the Maharashtrian saint has said that the final desire at the time of death becomes a basis for our next birth. Whoever remembers his sons at the time of death, becomes a pig. The person, who thinks of his houses becomes a ghost. One who thinks of wealth becomes a snake. Whosoever remembers a woman, becomes a harlot.<sup>25</sup> This shows that a man may become a beast, a crawling snake or a woman in his next birth according to his Karmas.

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## NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

The phenomenon of life is amazing. The seed of human being is in a drop of semen (*bindu*) of the male parent, which mixing with the blood (*rakt*) of the female parent within the womb, causes the conception. The woman conceives and the embryo develops in the womb in the form of a human body. The abdominal fire gives it due heat for growth. (Sri Raga M. 1, p. 63).<sup>1</sup> It stays there from nine to ten months to ripen, but after this period, he comes out of that fire-zone and enters another fire-zone known as the world of Maya, in which we live. (Ramkali M. 3, Anand p. 921).<sup>2</sup> Within the womb of the mother it is suspended upside down and in a state of meditation on the Lord. It is absorbed in prayer for its release from that fire. It is quite naked in that state and when it is released from that it comes in the world quite naked and ultimately when it dies, it will go away naked. (Sri Raga M. 1, Pehre, p. 74).<sup>3</sup>

If everything goes alright, the life develops in the world of Maya and the physical development is seen with our physical eyes. The baby with its tiny limbs grows into a full-fledged human being with the passage of time, just like a little sprout developing into a huge tree. The roots make the tree stand firm at its place, but the human being has been given power to move from one place to another with its legs. He is provided with sense-organs of perception and five organs of action. He has eyes to see, ears to hear, nose to smell, tongue to taste and skin to touch. He has the feet to walk, the hands to work, the mouth to speak alongwith two organs of creation and elimination. (Gauri M. 5, p. 236).<sup>4</sup>

The baby sucks milk from the teats of the mother and

grows. It is provided with the mental power and mind. It gradually gets the recognition of both the parents, who were responsible for its birth. It begins to express its feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, of pleasure and pain by giving smiles and crying. Then the faculty of speech also comes into action and the words 'Dad' and 'Mum' are uttered. The baby grows into a child, when the feelings of love and hate become manifest, the taste for various relishes begins to develop. It is followed by a period of learning and adopting the path for leading the life. Then the sexual urges arise, when the early period of life ends and the stage of youthhood comes. There is attraction for the opposite sex and the family life begins. This is a very important phase of life wherein one is confronted with innumerable problems of life, performing good or bad functions and undergoing the resultant pleasures or pains. After passing through his life of labour and industry and fulfilling the needs and wishes of his progeny, he becomes tired. His body loses its strength, his hair turn grey and finding no good responses from the members of his family, the anger seizes him, which reduces him further. He becomes bed-ridden and gasps for breaths and ultimately that time comes, when he has to leave this world. (Majh M. 1, p. 138).<sup>5</sup>

The above description of the span of life has been given just to bring home to the reader that all this life is imprinted on the mind of the being like a film, which unfolds itself in full, at the time of death, so that he may be able to know what good or bad deeds he has committed, which had been fully recorded by the scribes attending upon him. His whole life had been scrutinised. Kabir says :

*You should die in shame when you say that this is my house, because nothing belongs to you at the time of death.*

(Gauri Kabir, p. 325)<sup>6</sup>

He says again :

*Someone has amassed his wealth of five lakhs, but at*

*the time of death his metallic pitcher lies broken.*

(Gauri Kabir, p. 337)<sup>7</sup>

At another place he says :

*O stray mind ! Do not be fraudulent, this will reflect  
on you at the time of death.*

(Sorath Kabir, p. 656)<sup>8</sup>

According to Guru Arjan Dev :

*The sons, wife and all other men and women of the  
household—all these are the relatives for the sake of  
Maya and at the time of death, no one from them will  
stand there to save you; all these are false relations.*

(Sorath M. 5, p. 609)<sup>9</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur says :

*Such like conduct has become apparent in the world  
that with whomsoever you have exhibited your  
affection none of them has been helpful except Lord-  
God at the time of death.*

(Sorath M. 9, p. 634)<sup>10</sup>

He says again :

*Forsake all the illusions and remember the Name of  
the Lord, only this one will accompany you at the time  
of death.*

(Jaijwanti M. 9, p. 1352)<sup>11</sup>

Death is a great mystery. The sages have tried to speak about it in signs and symbols. Several investigations have been made about the near-death experiences. Only those people could say something, whose souls after leaving their bodies had risen far above because of some grievous accident or ailment, but had to come back suddenly on being treated in the clinics, they could recollect and relate something, but such experiences were mostly of limited nature and also identical to a great extent. According to the experiences of such floating souls, there was a definite path and the soul could easily cross the space through pitch darkness towards the light at a long distance. We shall talk about it at another place, but now I want to narrate my personal experience about my very close dying relatives, while standing by their bed-side.

### Three cases of Near-Death Experience

1. The very first family death that I have seen, was that of my eldest brother, who passed away in a hospital in Sadar area in Rawalpindi, now in Pakistan. He was an earning member of our family and had contracted the disease called 'elephantina' in Madras, where he was serving in a Sports Company. We lived in a village in Rawalpindi district, where no special medical facilities were available, hence he was brought from Madras and admitted in a hospital in Rawalpindi. He was merely twenty-six at that time and I, his youngest brother, only about twelve years old. A few months had passed in his treatment. I still very clearly remember, it was the evening of 24th of December, 1931. A slight improvement had been noticed in his illness for the last few days, but there was a sudden deterioration. One of his legs, which had swollen out of proportion, and from whose small eruptions, the watery liquid had been oozing out, on that very day it was noticed that instead of watery liquid, the blood oozed out and it was considered inauspicious. Whereas earlier he had been having a very controlled speech, it faltered as he talked with the mother, but still controlling himself he said, "I am alright." Though I was very young and could not understand this strange situation. For a while he began gazing constantly in a particular direction, where nothing was visible to me. My mother called upon him, "O dear son ! What are you feeling ?" To this query, he still gathering his strength, said, "O mother, I am alright." But still he mumbled. His speech faltered and kept his constant gaze in a particular direction. At this point, he repeatedly said, "I am innocent, I am innocent." I could not understand anything, but my mother realised that this was the final hour of her son. All of us had been keeping calm, but my mother at that time shouted thrice, "Dear son ! I bestow on you the mother's milk."

At this point I noted that my brother was gasping for breath and the pupils of his half-open and half-closed eyes kept moving constantly from right to left and from left to right till ultimately they stopped moving and the breathing also stopped. This was the end of life. The eyes were then closed by the attending Doctor.

2. The second case of the near-death experience was that of my mother, who was confined to bed on the break of her pivot-bone of the left leg, which at her age, could not be set right. We were at that time living at Mehrauli, a suburb of Delhi. I was a teacher of University of Delhi and had recently been awarded Ph.D. for my research-work on the Sikh Scripture. I had to go very often to attend to University work and whenever I went, I asked the permission of my ailing mother. One day, when I asked her permission to leave, she said, "You are always going away like this; I am now going to die." I was taken aback and asked her why she was saying so. She said, "All my dead relatives have gathered around me and this is a sure sign of my leaving." But though unwillingly, I had to go and on my return I found that she was in a coma and my niece was reciting 'Sukhmani' (Psalm of Peace) by her bedside. She was out of breath and after a short time she passed away. This occurred on 21st of June, 1959.
3. My third case of near-death experience was that of my father. I was then the Professor and Head of the Department of Punjabi at Punjab University, Chandigarh. During one stormy night, his foot slipped and he fell down. On this fall, his hipbone was fractured. For a few days, he remained admitted in Post-Graduate Medical Institute, but there was no improvement. Ultimately he was removed to the University bungalow, where his condition further deteriorated. One day, when I was not at home, he shouted very loudly according to my wife, calling me by name and saying,

"They have come, they have come, do, whatever you can." After that he kept staring in one direction and when I wanted to give him something to eat, he moved forcibly his right-hand finger as though asking us not to disturb him. After that he went into a coma and breathed his last.

We can deduce some facts from the above-mentioned three examples of 'near-death experience' :

1. That nearing the time of death, one finds himself face to face with some apparitions and his gaze is attracted towards them; there might be the filming of his whole life before him and a line of distinction being drawn between his good and bad deeds.
2. That many relatives, friends and close acquaintances also appear before him, just to welcome him in the world beyond death.
3. That the dying man may be awaiting for some decision regarding his future existence. He may be declared as sinful or innocent.

But none can save the dying person from the strong hands of the messengers of death, though he may repeatedly request them for some more time to finish his remaining errands. One can never know the exact time, when the death will pounce upon him. Sheikh Farid has given a metaphorical description about it. He says :

*On the bank of a stream, a crane is sitting and absorbed in his frolics. But suddenly, the falcon pounces upon this sporting crane. With the arrival of this falcon coming on the command of Lord-God, all the sports of the crane are forgotten. Whatever we have not even thought of, they are the doings of Lord-God.*

(Salok Farid, p. 1383)<sup>12</sup>

The man of the world is horrified on this sudden call, because all his plans and aspirations are shattered. He cannot pursue even his work in hand. Kabir has depicted this scene in the following manner :

*The time of service of life has ended. Now, you will have to present your accounts. The merciless messengers of Yama have come to take you away. What have you gained and what have you lost? Go with us immediately, in this very condition, because you have been called in Court. Such are the Orders from the Court of Lord-God. I pray that still there are some villages, from which I have to collect the donations, and this work I shall finish this very night. I shall also bear some of your expenses. I shall offer my Prayers to the Lord in the morning at the wayside-inn.*

(Suhi Kabir, p. 792)<sup>13</sup>

This shows that the man is bound by his mental impressions and does not want to leave the world and makes supplication for the grant of some more time to stay in the world.

When one feels horrified at the time of death, he shouts and calls for help. A typical example from mythology is quoted hereunder from the Vars of Bhai Gurdas :

"The sinner Ajamal lived with a prostitute in sin. He became impertinent to Guru, committed sins and was swayed by vicious intellect. He wasted his birth and moved within the terrible sea of existence. By the prostitute, he had six sons and thus earned the fruit of his sins. His seventh son was born and he became enthusiastic to perform his naming ceremony. He went to the abode of the Guru, where the Guruward named him Narayan. At deathbed, seeing the messengers of Yama, he cried in fear for the son Narayan. The Yama's messengers were ousted by the angels and he went to heaven without punishment. By remembering the Name of the Lord, his suffering ended."

The reader can realise from this example that the remembrance of the Name of God at the time of death is



greatly meritorious and rewarding. The same thing has been said by the saint Trilochan of Maharashtra :

*He, who remembers the Name of the Lord at the time of death, Trilochan says that that person is redeemed and the Lord resides in his heart.*

(Gujri Trilochan, p. 526)<sup>14</sup>

According to the saint, any other worldly wishes are responsible for the transmigration of the person in other suitable species. He is of the view :

*That one who remembers mammon at the time of death, he is born as a snake, he, who remembers a woman at the time of death, is born as a prostitute, he, who remembers the sons at the time of death, he is born as a pig and he, who remembers the mansions at the time of death, he is born as a ghost.<sup>15</sup>*

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## OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCES

The word 'Pavaar' which occurs in 'Majh ki Var' of Guru Nanak Dev, pertains to out of body experience. In one of his Saloks, it is written :

*Chauthai aae ungh akkhin meet pavaar giaa  
Bhi uth rachion vaad sai varhian ki pir badhi.*

(Var Majh M. 1, p. 146)<sup>1</sup>

These verses can be translated as, "In the fourth watch of the night, he undergoes drowsiness and while closing his eyes, his soul experiences an outing, but when comes back, it is engaged in strife as though he will live for a hundred years." In this Salok four watches of the night have been depicted. In the first watch, the man makes most of his life, meditating and doing everything at the right time. In the second watch he is entrapped in many worldly problems, from which it becomes difficult to withdraw. In the third watch, he attends mainly to his physical needs and remains absorbed in various relishes and tastes. In the fourth watch, as mentioned above, his soul wanders, dreaming for a life of hundred years. But if in all the eight watches of the night and day, he remains in the fear of the Lord, his mind also remains controlled.

I clearly remember that in one of the localities of Rawalpindi, there lived two men of the same name and of nearly the same age. One of them was seized by the messengers of Yama on a particular day. Though he remained in coma for some time, he did not breathe his last. After a few hours he regained his senses and the other man of the same name died that evening. The man who regained

his senses had undergone an out of body experience. We know that very often mistakes are committed by human beings, but the above example shows that such mistakes are also committed by the messengers of Yama. Though I could not personally meet the person, who became alive after having been reported as dead, I have been able to glance through some of the literature published in this connection, wherein various types of experiences have been mentioned.

The 'Out of the Body Experience' cannot be said to be identical with a dream. In a dream, there is movement like the living world, but on waking one finds that whatever he had seen, was not real. According to the saint Ravidas, a king slept in his bed and in his dream, he became a beggar, even being a king himself, and separated from kingship during his dream, he was in great suffering. But on waking he found that it was only an illusion like considering a rope as a snake in the darkness. But the reality does not emerge from a dream-experience, though it is often said that several impressions gained in day-to-day life are jumbled together in a dream. But when a man comes back from the 'out of the body experience', he always thinks that it was entirely real and no part of it was unreal. It was not merely imagination, but a projection of the astral body.

It is also said that there are certain drugs and beverages, which can cause an 'out of the body experience'. But it seems unlikely that such drugs can have any effect on the astral body. According to the Sikh Scripture, an ecstatic state said to arise with the use of drugs and beverages, is a misnomer, because they merely push the body to a state of insanity with no spiritual gain. The spiritual concentration comes only with the absorption in the Name of the Lord. The divine ambrosia trickles and the unstruck melody resounds only in a body steeped in contemplation on Name, when there is awakened the discriminating intellect. A Sikh sect, called Nihangs, often use 'Sukha' (hemp) as an aid to their militancy, though the Sikh Scripture forbids the use of

any type of drugs. It has, of course, nothing to do with the spiritual advancement.

Though I have never experienced an out of body excursion of the astral body, I clearly remember a dream, in which I found my astral body floating at some height, looking at my dead body down below, surrounded by numberless people paying homage to it. It was the body of some noteworthy Mahant, of whom I have no cognizance in my present life. It was a queer experience. Was it only a dream with no reality of its own or was it a projection of my astral body of some previous birth?

### The Knot

The astral body and the physical body are united together with a cord in a knot (*Gandh* or *Gaanth*), which is variously called as 'the silver cord' or 'the cord of light' or even as the 'the Golden thread'. This cord links the soul with the body in a knot in the very beginning of their connection. As long as this knot is there, there is life in the body and whenever this knot is opened, the soul-bird flies away and the body becomes lifeless. Even if the astral body comes out of the physical body on account of an accident or otherwise, if the physical body has to remain alive and the soul's worldly errand is not complete as yet, the cord-linkage remains intact. The cord is flexible and is able to cover any distance in its errand. The Indian mystics, Saints and Sufis have made a mention of this cord in their verses. At the time of death, this cord-knot is opened by the messengers of Yama. Guru Nanak Dev says :

*The knot has been opened, get up,  
the written order has come.* (Tukhari M. 1, p. 1110)<sup>2</sup>

According to Guru Arjan Dev :

*Nanak saith : O ignorant one ! Think over it,  
to-day or to-morrow, your knot is about to open.*  
(Sarang M. 5, p. 1216)<sup>4</sup>

This knot is also called *praanan di gandh* (the knot of breaths or the knot of life).

## The Experience

In the 'out of the body experience', the astral body of the person leaves the physical body and generally floats near the ceiling and looks down upon his physical body, then he enters a dark tunnel, at the end of which there is a light, which is a very bright light. Here he meets a being of light. At this point there is a barrier. Only they can cross the barrier, who have died, but the person of the 'out of body experience' cannot cross this point. One can have a look of the country beyond the barrier, whose beauty is said to be indescribable. One may see here the waving dead relatives. The person does not want to return, but he has to return, because he has still time to perform worldly errands. Such is said to be the experience of this person.

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## MISCELLANEOUS

There are several other important aspects of the subject of death, which have not been dealt with earlier. These are the allied subjects, whose mention must be made in brief here for the general comprehension of the reader. They are being discussed briefly one by one hereunder.

### 1. Stress/Distress

There are many internal and external stresses in human life, which is not a bed of roses. There is physical stress; there is mental stress, rather distress. We cry with pain and have to cope with illness or disability. Sometimes we are surrounded by many stresses of various natures. There can be external physical stresses. The stresses result in human suffering. The life on earth is full of three kinds of suffering and pain. The first is known as *Adhyatmik*, which is due to *intra-organic psychological causes and includes all physical and mental sufferings*. The second is *Adhibhautika*, which is due to *extra-organic natural causes like men, beasts, birds, thorns etc.* The third is *Adhidaivika*, which is due to the *supernatural causes like the planets, elemental agencies, ghosts, demons etc.* Wherever there are modes or gunas, there are sufferings and pains. Even the so-called pleasures lead us towards pain. The life in heaven is also subject to gunas. The main object before mankind is to get rid of these three kinds of pains and sufferings. In the Sikh Scripture these three types of suffering are known as *Teen Taap*, but these three ailments are also interpreted as *Aadhi (ailments of mind)*, *Biaadhi (ailments of body)* and *Upaadhi (ailments*



caused by illusion). Guru Arjan Dev says, "All the three ailments i.e. *Aadhi*, *Biaadhi* and *Upaadhi* have been destroyed, the *Trishna* (desire) has been stilled, the hopes have been fulfilled and all the sorrows and sufferings have ended." (Sarang M. 5, p. 1223).<sup>1</sup>

The changes in lifestyle also cause stress, because several additional problems are raised. The marriage, newborn baby, new home, new job, divorce, redundancy and retirement are some of the changes in lifestyle, which cause stress. Changes in responsibility at work, in working hours or conditions, in sleeping or eating habits are also the causes of distress. Deep distress arises from some adverse circumstances or events. A grievous disaster or misfortune may befall an individual or society or a country. For a child or children, the death of the parents or breadwinners is a grievous calamity. The death of the husband brings the calamity for the widow. The persecution of a distinct society because of religious fanaticism is a calamity for the society. The natural calamities may befall a country in the form of drought, famine, flood, earthquake etc. Sometimes evil conjunction of *Grahas* (planets) is foretold. Sometimes the storms, gales and lightening flashes cause destruction. The ghosts, demons and witches etc. are also the evil forces.

According to the Sikh Scripture all the ailments surround us, when we forget the Lord. (Majh M. 5, p. 135).<sup>2</sup> The Sikh Gurus laid down a definite moral code, which enjoins a Sikh to do such actions, which are called *higher karmas*. The practice of these higher karmas is the practice of virtues in life. The Sikh has to imbibe the godly qualities in his life. These qualities include Truth, Purity, Justice, Sweetness, Fearlessness, Mercy etc. The five major vices can be overcome with the practice of five virtues i.e. the lust can be overcome with self-control, anger with tolerance, greed with contentment, worldly affection with devotion to duty and ego with modesty. In a world vitiated by all types of stresses, ills and evils, one should avoid indulgence to the

extreme and also avoid self-mortification. On both the sides one loses balance, therefore the middle path is to be followed, which is the golden mean. One has neither to renounce the world nor jump into the field of action like an unbridled horse. He should never think of committing suicide. The same has been condemned by the Guru because the one who commits suicide is the butcher of the world and against the Will of the Lord. (Majh M. 3, p. 118).<sup>1</sup> The utmost precious life given by the Gracious Lord-God must not be wasted under stress. 'Suicide' is forbidden under the Divine Ordinance. Even the extreme stress of the 'Martyr' for the sacrifice done for the unbalanced principle or target of his group is unwanted. That martyrdom can only be considered complete, which is undertaken for the common objective of all humanity against the evil forces.

## **2. Body and Mind**

The body in itself is a dead mass without the life-force bestowed Graciously by the Lord. According to Guru Nanak Dev, "This body thinks that it is immortal and lives in peace, but it does not realise that this world is a play. It practises greed, avarice and falsehood and gets overburdened by them." He addresses the body like this, "O body ! I have seen you rolling in the dust like ashes. Listen to my instruction. O, my being ! The good work done by you will only abide with you; you will not get another such opportunity. I say again to you, O my body ! Listen to my advice. You falsely slander others and lose trust. You look at another man's wife and commit theft and bad actions. When the soul (life-force) leaves you, you are left behind like an abandoned woman. O body ! You lived in the state of dream. What have you done ? When I stole something by theft, it pleased my mind. I have received no honours in this world and have not earned anything for the next world. I have wasted my human birth uselessly. I have become very miserable, O father, says Nanak, None cares for me." (Gauri Cheti M. 1, pp. 154-55).<sup>4</sup>

This rebuke to the body by the founder Sikh Guru makes it clear that various stresses on the body result in its misery and the mind within the body is responsible for the same. The mind and the body are the two important constituents of the combined outer and inner human framework. The mind is the pivot of worldly life. It is related to intellect. The prayer of a Sikh lays emphasis on the higher plane for intellect and the lower plane for the mind, because the mind is mostly attracted towards the vices. The upper plane of intellect (right thinking) will obstruct vices from entering the plane of mind, being overshadowed by it. The mind, if let loose, can play havoc, and if kept under control, can raise us spiritually. These different states of mind have been depicted by the Gurus in their works. The cure suggested for the malady of the mind is the Name of the Lord. By it, the sins of the previous births are washed away. Metaphorically the mind is an elephant in the forest of the body. The Guru gives the goad of the True Word (Gauri Guareri M. 1, p. 221).<sup>5</sup> The five evils i.e. lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego surround the mind. These evils can be destroyed only with the Word of the Guru. The intellect should be kept unpolluted and above all sorts of quarrels. The right intellect should be a strong rider over the mind-horse, which is to be bridled and caught by the forelock. This intellect will lead us towards the Lord and we will be the recipients of honours. (Var Sarang M. 4, Salok M. 1, p. 1245).<sup>6</sup> Because of its company with the evils, the vices which originate in the mind, consist of ill-will towards others, greed in respect of what belongs to others and want of faith in the Scriptures. Against these vices, the virtues of the mind are kindness towards others, indifference towards material advantages and faith.

The body at any stage can fall down dead. We have seen that every minute of the life that passes and especially the old age, when the black hair turn white give us the message of the impending death.

### 3. Ghosts

While discussing the extent of the creation, Guru Arjan Dev says in *Sukhmani* that there are many million of ghosts, fiends, boars and deer. (Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 276)<sup>7</sup>. The Maharastrian saint Trilochan says that whosoever remembers houses at the time of death becomes a ghost. (Gujri Trilochan, p. 526).<sup>8</sup> There are people in the world who do not believe in the real existence of the ghosts. For them they are just hallucination. In spite of this, there are numerous stories of their hauntings. They are visualised from time to time. Ordinarily the ghosts of the dead are seen, but sometimes the ghosts of the living persons, who are seriously ill or nearing death, are also seen at distant places. They look like normal human beings, but they have the power to pass through the walls, as though they are not something physically solid, but only subtle images. They are semi-transparent forms.

Those who have come into contact with the ghosts, some ghosts are good in nature, but most of them are said to be frightening and hideous in shape and also evil. They create awe in the mind of the onlooker and are considered to be under the care of the devil. The stories of the frequent visitations of the ghosts are connected with some old houses and spread over a long span of years. They are said to close the doors and create sounds of knocking at the doors. They appear and melt away at will and sometimes their mysterious moans are heard. They are among the most widespread of all paranormal phenomena.

### 4. Dreams

The Sikh Scripture has interpreted human life as a dream. Even this world is a dream (Salok M. 9, p. 1428)<sup>9</sup>. A sleeping person always dreams. A dream is a period of subconscious brain-activity. The images that are stored in the mind during awakening, come back in one or the other form

during sleep. But sometimes the dreams bring in something new, which we had not thought of earlier. A person might have seen the aeroplanes moving in the sky during the day, would definitely be surprised on seeing himself physically flying in the void in his dream. Such a dream is considered an overlap with out of body experience, though the experts may give one or the other interpretation of the dream. There are precognitive dreams, in which the future is foreseen and such dreams have been recorded since very early times in several countries.

In Indian philosophy, four states of human activity have recognised i.e. *Jagrit*, *Svapana*, *Sushupti* and *Turiya*. The first three are the states of consciousness experienced by all men. The dream state is that in which the man is aware of the flow of images in his mind. At that time, the senses are asleep. There are mental pictures of things, without any rational control. The saint Ravidas says, "O Lord-God ! The doubt is such a delusion that it makes us believe that which is not there in reality. It is just as a king falling asleep on his throne and becoming a beggar in the dream. Actually he has the kingdom, but he has lost it in the dream, therefore he is in anguish—such is the state of my mind." (Sorath Ravidas, p. 657).<sup>10</sup> Having seen the colourful play of the world, the day of death arrived. All ended like a dream and only our earnings went with us. (Bilawal M. 5, p. 813).<sup>11</sup> One is never satiated without contentment. Like the objects of a dream, all the works are in vain. (Gauri Sukhmani M. 5, p. 279).<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Ancestors

The forefathers or manes : They have been called 'Pitr' in the Sikh Scripture. Ancient Hindus believed that the ancestors were sanctified by certain rites. They were satisfied by the recitation of Scriptures. They could be presented with food, drink, garments etc. They were to be worshipped with oblations and libations. Daily offerings were to be made to

them. Procreation of sons was considered a debt to them. They were considered the deities at a *Sraddha* (the funeral oblation and meal). Guru Nanak Dev rejected the ancestor-worship. He said, "If a robber robs a house and offers his loot in order to propitiate the ancestors, the robbed article is recognised in the other world and the manes are charged with theft. The hands of the mediator (i.e. Brahmin) are cut down—this is the Lord's Justice. Only that is received by one in the other world, which he earns honestly and gives in charity." (Var Asa M. 1, p. 472).<sup>13</sup> The Guru believed that only one's own actions were rewarded in the other world. The offerings to the manes do not reach them. Kabir was very emphatic on this point. "Nobody cares for the fathers, when they are alive. The offerings are made to them, when they die. Even these offerings are not received by the manes, because they are eaten away by the crows and the dogs....." (Gauri Bairagan Kabir, p. 332).<sup>14</sup>

## 6. Hypnotism

Hypnotising is artificially producing a state in which the subject appears to be in a deep sleep, without any power of changing his mental or physical condition, except under the influence of some external suggestion or direction. On recovering from this condition, the person has usually no remembrance of what he has said or done during the hypnotic state. Such a practice was not prevalent in the centuries, when the Gurus and saints of the Sikh Scripture composed their hymns. There were other charms and spells called 'Kaman', which the brides practised on their grooms for subjugation. The 'Adi Granth' rejects such practices. Guru Nanak Dev says, "One should know the Will of the Lord and apply the *Chandan-Scent* of fear to the mind. One should charm the beloved with the charm of merit and in this way attain Him." (Tilang M. 1, p. 725).<sup>15</sup>

On the basis of present-world experiments, it is now believed that we can not only be hypnotised to live past lives,

we can also be hypnotised to see into possible future incarnations.

## 7. Materialism versus Spiritualism

The materialists believe in the extinction of personality with the death of an individual. For them the life is a purely biological process. But against their views, the modern spiritualists have a firm belief in the human survival after death. The Society for Psychical Research was founded in London in 1882. These religionists make a mention of their seances, while talking about the existence of life after death. In such seances, heavy tables are moved by the spirits, they play on the musical instruments; the dead relatives not only speak in their familiar voices, but also materialise before the sitters in the seance-room. The communications through the mediums, who take on the facial features of the deceased are on course rare, but it is said about Queenie Nixon, when entranced, actually underwent such transfigurations. (About Queenie Nixon the book *Life After Death* published in 1995 by Parallel Unit 13-17, Avonbridge Trading Estate, Atlantic Road, Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9QD may be consulted, pages 12-15).

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